

The cuisine of Hunan Province is well known for its liberal use of spice.

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"The spectacular No. 33 tomb is probably the burial place of one of the kings of the mysterious Ba Kingdom."

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During the summer there are frequent avalanches, loud and spectacular.

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Beijing UN Staff Express Shock at Bombing

By Zhu Hua

Staff of the United Nations in China expressed shock and sadness at the news of the death of Sergio Vieira de Mello and other UN employees in the bombing of the UN Office in Baghdad on August 19.

De Mello was the top UN envoy in Iraq. In April 2000, he paid an official visit to China in his capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in East Timor.

"We join the UN Secretary-General in our grief and condolences for a beloved colleague and a hero

who has given his life for the cause of peace and humanity. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this tragedy and their families," said Khalid Malik, United Nations resident coordinator and Development Program resident representative.



The flag flies at half-mast at the United Nations building, Beijing.

Photo by Cui Jun

By Sun Ming

Suzhou, a city in east China's Jiangsu Province, is variously known as the "Venice of the East" and an "earthly paradise," as in the expression familiar to virtually every Chinese, *Shang you tian tang, xia you Su Hang* (In heaven there is paradise, on earth there is Suzhou and Hangzhou).

Famous for its ancient classical gardens and canals, it is a city in which the preservation of cultural heritage is taken very seriously.

As such, the Suzhou government has been quick to defend itself against claims that the proposed new museum will damage the city's historic legacy.

Critics of the plan argue that the area in which the new museum is to be built should be preserved as it is, and that the modern building will detract from the environment of two of the city's most celebrated historic sites, Zhuozhengyuan (The Humble Administrator's Garden) and Zhongwangfu, the residence of Li Xiucheng, one of the leaders of the Taiping Rebellion.

Those who support it say the actual site of the museum is not culturally sensitive, and that the building will enhance the environs.

At the request of the State Council of China, the Ministry of Construction has sent an investigative team to Suzhou to report on the case. Their conclusions will be published soon, according to an official from the Suzhou Municipal Government who declined to give his name.

Site suitability questioned

A model of Ieoh Ming Pei's design for the new Suzhou Museum was put on display from August 6 to 12 in the present museum in the picturesque garden city in eastern China's Jiangsu Province.

Huang Wei, a retired landscape engineer from the Suzhou Landscape Gardening Bureau, was the first person to publicly question the suitability of the proposed site.

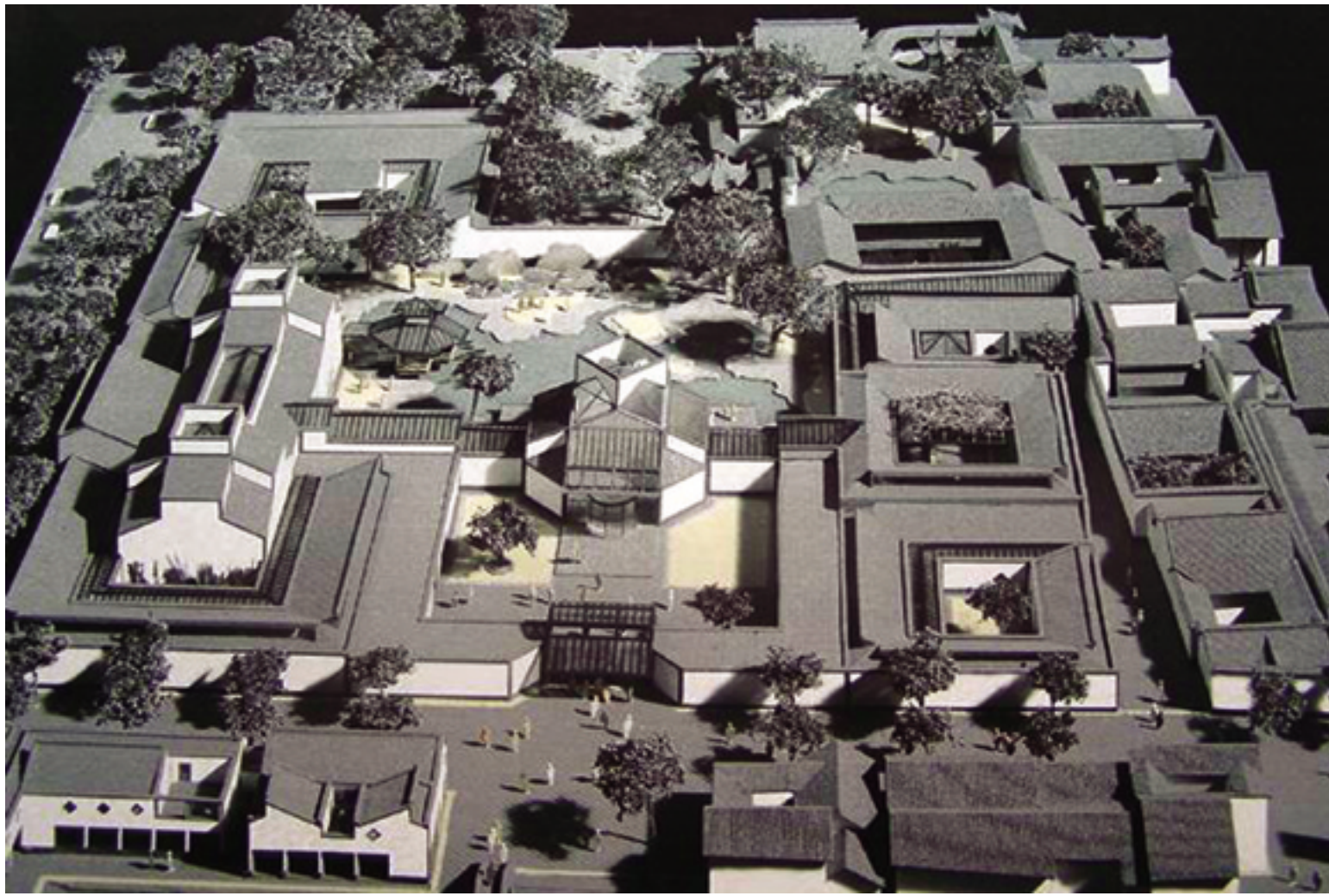
"Can you believe it? In order to build the museum, hundreds of ancient buildings in an area covering over 5,000 square meters will be destroyed," Huang told *Beijing Today* in a telephone interview Monday.

In fact, Huang first started speaking out about the location of the proposed museum in April last year, but it is only recently that his comments have started attracting the attention of the media.

The Suzhou Cultural Bureau, which is in charge of the museum project, does not agree with Huang's view. The bureau argues

Dispute over Suzhou Museum Site

The blueprint for the new Suzhou Museum by internationally renowned architect I. M. Pei is creating a controversy that has attracted the attention of China's State Council. The fuss revolves not around the actual design of the museum, but its proposed location.



Model of the proposed Suzhou Museum

that there is only one ancient building in the area that needs to be protected. The building, occupying an area of 418 square meters, was once part of Zhongwangfu. In fact much of the area slated for demolition was once part of Zhongwangfu, but falls outside the boundary of the officially protected area.

"We will move the structure to another place and won't damage it at all," an employee from the bureau who only gave his surname, Zhang, told *Beijing Today* on Monday.

Cultural relic area?

The new Suzhou Museum will cover an area of more than 10,000 square meters, to the southwest of The Humble Administrator's Garden and west of Zhongwangfu.

The Humble Administrator's Garden, built in 1509 by Wang

Xianchen, an imperial envoy of the Ming Dynasty, was listed as a world heritage in 1997.

Zhongwangfu originally consisted of two parts. The western section was the residential area, and the eastern contained the administrative buildings of the rebel Taiping court. In the 1960s, most of the east section was formally listed as a national level first grade protected cultural relic, but the western section and a smaller area on the eastern edge was not included.

"Historically, the site of the new Suzhou Museum was also a part of Zhongwangfu. It contained the residences of Li Xiucheng and his relatives," said Huang Wei. "But the area officially recognized as Zhongwangfu only contains the administrative buildings."

Huang's views are support-

ed by many cultural relics experts. Lin Yuanxiang, a senior consultant from the China World Cultural Heritage Research Committee, told *Beijing Youth Daily* last Thursday, "Besides some residences of Li Xiucheng and his relatives, some intact ancestral temples and many ancient residences built in the late Qing Dynasty also still stand in this area. They are all precious relics. How can we demolish them?"

Government defends selection

Chen Rong, vice-director of the Suzhou Culture Bureau, stressed at a news conference held last Friday that the government's decision to use the area was lawful.

"We always take the issue of cultural relics very seriously. We certainly won't destroy them. But the area designated for the new

Suzhou Museum is not part of a nationally protected area. Even so, we'll still move the old house out of the area to a safe place."

Chen listed three reasons for the site's selection as the location of the new Suzhou Museum. First, the Suzhou Municipal Government wants to renovate the area and improve the general environment.

"The area has a very disordered appearance. It contains the Pingjiang District Hospital, a nursery school and several apartment buildings built in the 1970s. Is this the precious area that Huang Wei and some experts claim it to be?" he told *Beijing Youth Daily* last Friday.

Huang explained that during the Cultural Revolution, many ancient buildings in the area were destroyed and many

of the newer structures are not consistent with the environment of the area.

Huang dismisses this argument, asking, "Is this a reason we should demolish the whole area? It is a historic site still containing many ancient buildings. What we should do is to remove those structures that don't match the environment."

The second reason for the government to choose the site is that the new museum will be part of a cultural relic zone containing the Humble Administrator's Garden, Zhongwangfu and Shizilin, another classical garden. "They are all famous historic sites in Suzhou. The new museum will provide a focal point linking them together," said Chen.

"Thirdly, the new museum will adjoin the existing one. We'll retain the current one, which will help reduce the required investment by around one third," he said.

The present Suzhou Museum is located inside Zhongwangfu, and houses a valuable collection of Qing dynasty sculptures and silk embroidery, as well as older relics unearthed in the Suzhou region.

Jiangnan Shibao, a newspaper in Jiangsu Province, reported last Friday that 93 percent of visitors who saw the model of the proposed new museum supported the plan.

Buffer zones also need protection

According to the World Heritage Convention, both the actual area of world heritage sites and a buffer zone surrounding it should be protected by appropriate legislation.

Wang Damin, the deputy director of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, admitted that the site of the new Suzhou Museum falls within the buffer zone surrounding the world heritage listed Humble Administrator's Garden, but declined to comments on the choice of the location.

"Any changes within the buffer zone should comply with strict procedures. The procedures for the approval of the new Suzhou Museum haven't been completed yet," Wang told *Beijing Youth Daily* last Friday.

The Suzhou Cultural Bureau also declined to comment specifically about the buffer zone. "Buffer zone? We only know that we won't damage any historical sites nearby," said an employee of the bureau who declined to give his name when *Beijing Today* called on Monday.

(Continued on page 2)

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: ZHANG XIAOXIA
EDITOR: SUN MING
DESIGNER: LI SHI

City Olympic Community Debuts

By Xiao Rong

Dongsi in Dongcheng District has become Beijing's first "Olympic Community" following the launch of a free English training program in the area by New Oriental Education Group and the Dongsi Street Office last Saturday.

The program is aimed at encouraging local citizens to

learn to communicate in English through regular oral English instruction. New Oriental, a leader in China's English language training market, will provide several courses specially designed for different members of the community.

Dongsi resident Yang Wenli, 89, said, "I used to be the principal of

a primary school, and I want to learn more English, so I think this campaign is a good thing." His sentiments were echoed by neighbor Sun Jing, a fifth-grade student.

"The English language can help promote the Olympic spirit and act as a bridge between China and the world. So the improvement of Beijingers' English communi-

cation levels is essential to our city's push to host the best Olympics ever," said Dongsi community office director Yuan Yansheng at a press conference held last Saturday for the start of the campaign.

The Dongsi area, home to BOCOG's headquarters, is one of the Beijing's 25 protected historical and cultural areas.

Liaoning Plans Development Zone in Shenyang

By Yu Shanshan

The government of Liaoning Province is brewing up plans to set up a new economic development zone in the provincial capital, Shenyang, dubbed the Shenyang Economic Zone.

The plans are part of larger efforts on the part of the central government to spur growth in China's northeastern region.

"The zone answers the objective need for development of the market economy and the rejuvenation of old industrial production bases in Liaoning," Wen Shizhen, Communist Party Secretary of the province, said at a seminar on the proposed zone on August 10. That event was attended by dozens of government officials and domestic and overseas experts, many of whom suggested the plan be expanded to focus on the construction of a "Greater Shenyang City Belt."

Under such a scheme, Shenyang and its five neighboring cities of Anshan, Fushun, Benxi, Liaoyang and Tieling in central Liaoning would form an urban belt covering a total

area of 59,000 square kilometers and with a population of 10.5 million people.

The port city of Yingkou, which lies at the edge of the Bohai Bay, could also be included in the proposed zone to give it a window for direct trade and shipping.

Wen emphasized that these cities' current levels of economic development and infrastructure construction make them perfect candidates to be part of such an economic zone, which could become an important domestic production base and a major center for high-tech industry and farm-product processing in northeast China.

The region used to be China's industrial core but has fallen far behind the country's booming coastal areas since reform and opening-up policies were initiated in the late 1970s. The development plan for the area was modeled on the two city belts in the Pearl River Delta and Yangtze River Delta regions, both of which have become economic powerhouses.



Sun Zheng left Ditan Hospital last Saturday.

Photo by Cui Jun

China's Last SARS Patients Discharged from Hospital

By Yu Shanshan

The last two people in the Chinese mainland being treated for severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) have fully recovered and were discharged from Beijing Ditan Hospital last Saturday morning after stays of over 100 days. Subsequently, the hospital has resumed its normal clinic services after halting them for five months to focus on treating SARS victims.

The two patients, Lu Zhiyan, a 45-year-old medical worker, and Sun Zheng, a 19-year-old university student, were hospitalized in April after being diagnosed as having contracted SARS. They were declared SARS-free by doctors over three weeks ago, but had to stay at the hospital to undergo treatment for health problems that arose as a result of the debilitating virus.

Han Demin, deputy director of the Beijing Health Bureau, announced at the Ditan Hospital last Saturday that the discharge of the last SARS

patients did not mean the end of the anti-SARS campaign. "Right now, we're not quite sure about where and how the SARS virus lives and whether SARS will reappear or not," he said.

Han added that Beijing is fully prepared to resist and recurrence of SARS. Major hospitals still have fever wards and contingents of medical staff specialized in treating the disease and preventing its transmission.

On August 16, the Ministry of Health reported there had been no new cases of SARS nor deaths from the disease for a period of 24 hours, for the first time following the virus' explosive outbreak. By that time, a total of 5,327 people were reported to have contracted SARS, 4,959 of whom were cured and discharged from hospital, while 349 died.

The ministry announced last Saturday after the release of the last SARS patients that it would thereby suspend daily reports on the SARS situation in China.

Shishahai Bars Band Together to Cultivate Quiet

By Shan Jinliang

With no fanfare, a self-disciplinary association covering bars in the Shishahai area was established on August 7 in a bid to ensure the popular area keeps a quiet style to set it apart from the noisy Sanlitun bar street in Chaoyang District.

Nearly overnight, the ranks of bars on the banks of the lake exploded from just around a dozen to over fifty.

While most of these bars and tea houses cultivate a quiet, contemplative feel, some newcomers try to draw customers with blaring music and gambling, in the end disturbing the protected community around the lake.

Concerned by the unchecked growth of the area, the Di'anmen Police Station and many bar owners decided in early July that discipline was required, and one month later formed a united association of

21 bars. According to the group's charter, members should avoid loud music, reject "erotic acts, gambling and drugs", protect the surrounding environment and curb illegal competition.

Wang Xiaohong, co-founder and director of the association, told *Beijing Today* last Tuesday that the group is also intended to improve communication between member bars and the local government.

The same day, Di'anmen Police Station chief Kong Yi said the station has agreed to not only help the association prevent illegal activities, but also to make Shishahai a name known among recreation circles nationwide.

Some newer bars have not joined the group, in many cases. Bai Feng, owner of the "No Name" bar that put Shishahai on the nightlife map, has not joined, but did state that the area should follow its own, quieter path.

By Zhao Pu

The renovation project of the Nanchizi area, between the Forbidden City and Wangfujing in Dongcheng District is almost complete. Most of the 59 renovated *siheyuans*, or courtyard houses, in the area, one of Beijing's 25 designated historical and cultural zones, have been locked up, waiting for the return of the residents; a few of them are still awaiting the final touches.

The renovation project, started in May 2002, covers a total area of 6.9 hectares, affecting the homes of 3,038 residents. "The biggest challenge of the whole renovation project has been to keep the original cultural flavor of the historic residential area while upgrading the infrastructure and living standards," said Lin Nan, chief architect of Zhuhe Architectural Design Studio, the designer of the project.

Nine key *hutongs*, or lanes, within the original Nanchizi area and the general layout of the dwellings in them were preserved in the project. The old names of these hutongs have also been preserved.

The 59 *siheyuans* have all been renovated, some completely rebuilt, in accordance with the typical style of old Beijing residences, using traditional building materials and following traditional architectural designs. Forty-nine in the central part of the zone are two-story structures, while the other 10, near Nanchizi Dajie, are single-story.

According to Cai Yaozhong, chief engineer of the project, each *siheyuan* will accommodate four households, and all



A long-time resident of Nanchizi inspects her restored home

Photo by Chen Bai

Historic Street Returned to Form, Residents

are connected to water, electricity and gas. "All the pipes and wiring are concealed in the walls; and all vents have traditional floral designs," he told *Beijing Today*, adding that most of the residents will return to their renovated homes by the end of this month.

Some 100 underground parking spaces have been constructed in the area, as a way of overcoming the problem of limited space and maintaining the traditional appearance of environment, according to Lin Nan. "The most difficult problem in terms of infrastructure

was providing parking," he said.

Pudu Temple, in the center of the Nanchizi area, was also renovated as part of the project. The 300-year-old Buddhist temple, which had been occupied by a primary school and a number of households since 1949, was cleared out and rebuilt according to its original layout. Moreover, 64 old trees within the Nanchizi area have been left untouched to better preserve its historical value.

The Nanchizi area was part of the old Imperial City during the Ming and Qing dynasties, off

limits to the general public. The area contained scores of imperial warehouses and workshops, serving as a service area for the Forbidden City. The hutongs were all named after major warehouses and workshops, such as Ciqiku Hutong, named after the porcelain warehouse that once stood there.

Many of the workshops and warehouses were destroyed in 1917, six years after the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty. Nanchizi was turned into a residential area after the fire, and most of the buildings in the area date from this time.

(Continued from page 1)

Harmony with the environment?

I.M. Pei signed the contract to design the new museum on April 30 last year with the Suzhou Municipal Government. The design was completed in May this year.

"To be frank, his design is quite good. It is just the location to which I am strongly opposed," Huang Wei stressed.

The museum complex will be no higher than 17 meters. It will consist of an underground and a ground level, with a painting and calligraphy hall for valuable relics from Suzhou's Huqiu Tower and Ruiguang Tower, a Ming and Qing dynasties art hall, and a temporary exhibition hall. There will also be a bookstore, film and television hall, multi-functional hall and an underground storage area of about 1,000 square meters.

"The design for the museum, represents a modern interpretation of traditional Suzhou-style architecture, blending the design of the Humble Administrator's Garden and Zhongwangfu with a style reflecting the architecture south of the Yangtze River," *Suzhou Daily* quoted deputy mayor of Suzhou, Zhu Xinmin last Thursday.

However, Mao Weilian, a history professor from Guangzhou University, argues that the new Suzhou Museum will destroy the integrity of Zhongwangfu and threaten the integrity of the Humble Administrators Garden.

Mao cited the recent halting

of construction of a dam 1.3 kilometers from the world heritage listed Dujiangyan Dam, in Sichuan Province. "Anything that might damage the integrity of a world heritage site should be banned," he said.

One year protest

"I began to protest about the site of the new Suzhou Museum from April last year," Huang told *Beijing Today*, "Since then, I've presented written reports to many organizations, but always no answer."

In April last year, I.M. Pei asked the Suzhou government to organize a seminar for him. The internationally renowned Chinese American architect, who was also born in Suzhou, wanted to hear the opinions of local experts.

"I was just one of the six experts invited to the seminar," said Huang. It was then I first learned of the proposed location. I presented my objections, but no one took my views seriously, including Pei. It seems that they paid more attention to the design itself."

Too many old buildings?

Li Weini, a researcher from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told *Beijing Today*, the case reflected the common problem of determining how much cultural heritage should and can be saved? "Will we keep all the hutongs in Beijing? I don't think so. The same is true for Suzhou." Li pointed out that no city could retain all its old buildings forever. "What we should do is identify and protect the relics. As for some old buildings, like those in the area to be used for the new Suzhou Museum, we have to pull them down. Certainly, we should try to save something that is really necessary to be saved."

"But it's hard to give a clear line between relics and old buildings, that's why so many such disputes arise."

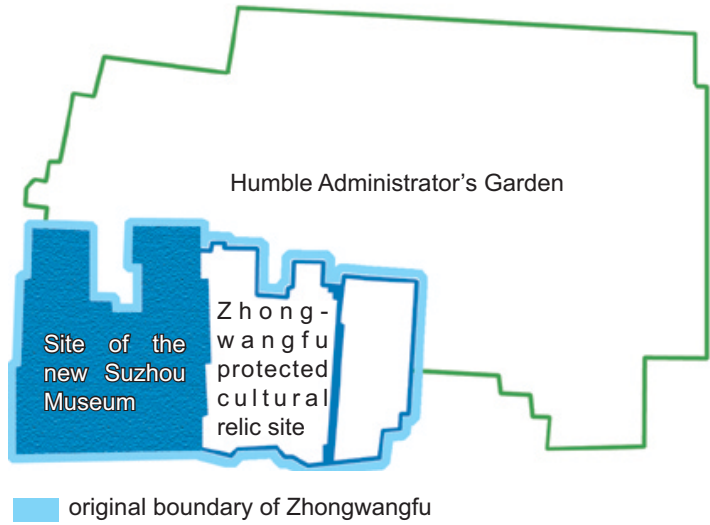


Photo by Qi Zhenlin

I. M. Pei has been instrumental in the design of some of the world's best known buildings, including:
The Bank of China Tower, Hong Kong
The Bank of China Head Office, Beijing
The Fragrant Hills Hotel, Beijing
The Milho Museum in Shiga, Japan
The Grand Louvre, Paris
The east wing of the National Gallery, Washington DC
The John F Kennedy Library, Boston
The World Trade Center, Miami
The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Cleveland

Sixth High-tech Expo Highlights Projects Recommendation

By Xiao Rong

A total of 325 investment bidding projects worth \$16 billion are to be tendered at the sixth China Beijing International High-tech Expo, to be held from September 12 to 15.

Twenty-five infrastructure projects, with a total expected investment of US \$4.86 billion are the highlights of the "Key Project Recommendations for Beijing Urban Development" at the expo, according to Yan Xiaoyan, general economic director of the city development planning commission, at last Friday's press conference.

"We plan to introduce to investors home and abroad a series of key

infrastructure construction projects for Beijing, including the No. 4 and No. 10 subway line, the second phase of the Beijing-Chengde Expressway, as well as the management transferring project of the Beijing-Shijiazhuang Expressway," said Yan.

He added that projects of modern manufacturing industry, commercial and tourism industry, as well as local characteristic economic zones will also dominate the "Key Project Recommendations for Beijing Urban Development."

The expo will also introduce for the first time the merger or acquisition projects of 104 state-owned enterprises, inviting foreign or private

capital to join in the reorganization of the city's top-performing industrial enterprises.

"Trade talks on high-tech and economic projects will be the focus of the sixth expo. The exhibition and exchange activities will also recommend key projects," said Chu Xiangyin, vice director of the expo organizer Beijing Sub-Council of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade last Friday.

Besides organizing the regular exhibition, eight forums and 11 exchange activities, the expo will hold six trade talks introducing over 10,000 projects that cover IT, biological and medical technology, environ-

ment protection, infrastructure and public facilities.

The key projects of the investment hotspots for China's medium and small sized cities will debut at the expo. Fifty participating hotspots including Inner Mongolia, Shandong, and Heilongjiang have signed up.

To date, over 2,000 domestic and foreign enterprises and institutions have confirmed attendance at the exhibition of the expo. The New Beijing Key Investment Bidding Projects Exhibition, to be held in the Haidian Exhibition Hall, will showcase the preferential investment policies and industry development plans of the capital.



Photo by Photocom

Pepsi and Sichuan Partner Face Lengthy Legal Battle

By Yu Shanshan

PepsiCo's hopes of resolving its difficulties with its joint venture partner in China, Sichuan Yunlu Industrial, were dealt a blow last Thursday when it emerged that Yulu was filing for arbitration with a government trade body, and seeking compensation for alleged breach of contract.

"We've officially filed an arbitration against Pepsi (China) Investment, the local representative of the US-based company, before the China International Economic and Trade Commission (CIETC)," Qu Zhidi, deputy general manager of Sichuan Yulu Industrial, announced at a news conference at the China World Hotel on August 14. "We are fully confident of winning the arbitration," he added.

The move is the latest turn in a year-long conflict, sparked when

Pepsi tried to halt all contracts and agreements and dissolve its joint venture with the government-backed Sichuan Yulu, on suspicion it had misused company funds. Pepsi took its case to an international arbitration panel in Stockholm, Sweden last August. But on August 8 this year, the Stockholm panel decided that it had "no jurisdiction" in the dispute.

In a statement released last Thursday, Pepsi China said it had split the case into two parts at the request of the Stockholm arbitrator, and in fact, the arbitration panel did not make any arbitration on the main body of this case. The two parts refer to the halting of the co-operation contract, and stopping the trademark contract and formula providing agreement.

"We remain confident of our position in both cases and are optimistic about the outcome of arbitration,"

Pepsi said in the statement.

Sichuan Pepsi was a joint venture formed in 1994 by Pepsi China and Sichuan Radio, Film and Television Industrial Development Company, a subsidiary of the Sichuan Bureau of Radio, Film and Television (SBRFT). Since then, Pepsi (Sichuan) has developed with an annual growth rate of 110 percent and its production tops the Asia Pacific area. A Sichuan Pepsi survey showed it had a dominant share of the market, far outselling Coca-Cola, with an 80 percent market share.

According to Qu Dizhi, Sichuan Pepsi vice president, the dispute between the senior management team has been over the strategic plan Pepsi (Sichuan) should follow, specifically, that Pepsi (Sichuan) alleges that Pepsi China has squeezed its Chinese partner by raising the prices of the unique drink formulas, and that in August

2001, the joint venture broke ties with Sichuan Bureau of Film, Radio and Television and launched a new company called Yunlu. Pepsi (China) sees the new partner as a privately owned company and refuses to cooperate. In regards to the restructuring of SBRFT, Qu said it was in accordance with Chinese law and Sichuan Yunlu, transformed from SBRFT, was founded to deal with the co-operation.

Meanwhile, as a result of the poor relations with its Sichuan partner, in July 2002, Pepsi China demanded it change the board directors of the Sichuan joint venture, but the Sichuan side refused.

Despite the dispute, Zhu Huaxi, president of Pepsi China said Pepsi's confidence about investing in China had not been undermined. It wants to find a new partnership based on observing law and order, mutual trust and transparent decision-making.

Sina Promotes Search with Google



Sina launches its new search platform with a performance of traditional Sichuan "Face Change" drama.

Photo provided by Sina.com

By Shan Jinliang

China's largest news website, Sina.com announced the launch of its new search engine on August 6 in a move to find a new profit growth point to counter slowing growth in other business areas.

It is the first major reorganization of Sina's search platform in five years, and is the result of a cooperation with Google. Other partners include Lycos.com, Sinobnet.com and Ctrip.com, China's No.1 travel website.

Soon after Sina's announcement, another portal website, Sohu.com announced the addition of new content including what it termed "theme search" and "one-stop searching" to its own search platform, while a third portal, Netease, is rumored to be about to renew its own search engine.

The moves suggest that portal websites see search services as the next profit growth point following chargeable email service, online games and short messaging service (SMS).

The hope is even bigger for Sina.com, given the underwhelming success of the last two services it introduced. Sina.com CEO Wang Yan admitted last week to local press that its ambitious online game with South Korean company NCSoft was not performing well. At the same time China Mobile, a user of the portal websites, announced the halt of erotic-related SMS of some leading portal websites, and with the slowing down of China's mobile phone sales, Sina.com is facing a slump in income.

Sina.com vice president Zhou Shuhua said in a press release on August 6 that aided by search engine services, online ads could be more effectively transferred to the target consumers, which could be the next profit growth point for Sina.com. Zhou said the company is also seeking a new moneymaking model by combing search and SMS.

Wang showed his confidence about the new search platform, and pre-

dicted that the search-related revenues will contribute seven to 10 percent of its overall income next year, and Sina.com will be the No. 1 in the market.

However, things might not be that easy for Wang and Zhou. China Search, a semi-official collaboration of China's news websites led by China.org.cn and Sinobnet.com, and Baidu.com has taken a solid position in China's search market, and is now said to hold 80 percent of the national market.

China Search president assistant Zheng Tienan told *Beijing Today* on Monday it is time to cooperate rather than fight among Chinese search companies. He indicated the only competitor is Google, but he said China Search would surpass Google soon not only in technique but also in operation. Baidu had announced it outperformed Google in a number of indexes in a public test this June.

SOEs to Recruit Executives Worldwide

By Leng Shuhua

Six top state-owned enterprises directly under the central government will recruit seven high-ranking managers worldwide, according to a China Central Television (CCTV) report last week.

The six companies will be the first group of experimental units chosen by the Supervisory and Administrative Committee of State Property, which is in charge of over 100 large state-owned enterprises in China.

Some positions could be as senior as deputy general manager of a group company. The list of the enterprises and the positions is awaiting approval and expected to be released soon, according to the report.

Party secretary of the committee, Li Yizhong, told CCTV on August 12, "It is a reform goal for us to recruit our new state-owned enterprise staff. We must introduce the best employees from home and abroad, since we are building up the multinationals with international competitiveness."

A few large state-owned enterprises have already voiced support. "We hope to be a transnational company in the future and send the senior managers to receive training aboard every year," a manager of the China National Petroleum Corporation who requested anonymity told CCTV on August 11.

Toyota to Produce Luxury Car in China

Toyota Motor Corporation plans to invest US \$311 million to produce its luxury "Crown" model in China.

The first batch of Crowns is expected to roll off the production line in two years. It will be the first time for Toyota to produce a luxury car outside Japan, according to a source with the motor corporation on Thursday.

The increased capital will be used to build a new auto plant for the Tianjin Toyota Company to make the Crown. Tianjin Toyota, a joint venture set up by Toyota and the Tianjin No. 1 Auto Corporation in 2000, is now manufacturing the Vios, an economy car model.

The investment increase plan will be implemented in compliance with an agreement between Toyota and the China FAW Group signed this April. Under the plan, FAW would become a new investor in Tianjin Toyota.

According to the plan, the former Tianjin Toyota will change its name to Tianjin-FAW-Toyota, and the total investment in the new company is expected to reach 408 million US dollars.

Analysts say that the investment increase is an apparent sign that Toyota is stepping up its efforts to tap China's auto market, of which it hopes to occupy 10 percent.

From next year, another Toyota car model, the Corolla, will be produced in Tianjin.

To date, Audi is the only luxury automaker on the Chinese market. But the monopoly is expected to be broken when the BMW III series rolls off the production line in September this year. (Xinhua)

Lucent to Launch China 3G Development Center

US-based communications technologies giant Lucent is to set up a 3G-development center in Nanjing, the capital of east China's Jiangsu Province.

The center will specialize in research and development of the third-generation mobile communications technologies supporting CDMA and WCDMA, according to the company on Tuesday.

Expected to be operational on September 1, the center will promote Lucent's mobile communications technologies not only in China, but worldwide, the company said.

Lucent's China development center will employ more than 100 engineers for its initial programs, the company noted. (Xinhua)

NCR Unveils Self-service Products

By Xiao Rong

NCR Corporation announced in Beijing Tuesday a new generation automatic teller machines, to debut at the 2003 China International Exhibition on Financial Banking Technology and Equipment to be held from September 2 and 5.

As well as dispensing cash, the new machines can deliver non-physical media such as MP3 music, e-tickets and e-collectables like cartoons, film characters and electronic football cards, downloadable to a mobile phone or PDA.

"(The new machines) show the potential role of self-service in delivering electronic media to consumers anywhere, anytime through a trusted point of payment and delivery, satisfying the consumer need and the business need for security and ensuring payment for value," said C K Chan, NCR general manager of the Financial Solutions Division in China Hong Kong region, at Tuesday's press conference.

As the exhibition participant boasting the largest displaying size, NCR will also unveil many other self-service products, ranging from hardware, software and services, it says will provide real, modern, self-service solutions that cater to growing market needs.

Blackout Cost to Reach \$6B



Huge power blackouts hit New York and other major cities across the northeast United States and Canada on August 15.

New York, August 19 (AP) - The blackout that stranded millions of travelers, halted assembly lines and spoiled tons of food cost an estimated \$4 billion to \$6 billion, but this will be no more than a temporary ripple in the economy, experts say.

"It is a minor nuisance, as opposed to a major disaster," said David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poors. He added that the closures were too short to have a significant effect on overall manufacturing and the retailing industry.

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Economy.com, said most of the losses would be recouped in the next few days and weeks. There were even some winners.

Liquidation.com, which sells excess goods from retailers, experienced a surge in goods bought online this past weekend.

Home Depot, the nation's largest home improvement chain, and its second-ranked rival, Lowe's Cos., both

did big business in generators.

As disasters go, it won't make the Top 10 and probably not even the Top 20 in terms of insured property losses, according to Insurance Services Office Inc., a Jersey City, N.J.-based advisory company.

But plenty of other businesses suffered.

"The biggest losers are the ones that have been losing for the past three years ... the cities, airlines and small retailers," Zandi said.

The blackout cost New York's 22,000 eateries alone between \$75 million to \$100 million in wasted food and lost business, the New York State Restaurant Association calculated.

Broadway lost \$1 million worth of tickets for shows canceled after the lights went out Thursday, and Jed Bernstein, president of the League of American Theatres and Producers, estimated that theaters will only recoup about half those sales.

"Broadway shows are thinly capitalized compared to other industries," Bernstein said. "Any unforeseen loss is potentially damaging to shows."

Mayor Michael Bloomberg said there would be an estimated \$40 million in lost tax revenue and \$10 million in overtime pay for city workers, including extra police officers on patrol Thursday night and sanitation crews that worked through the weekend to pick up spoiled food.

The airline industry, which lost several days of travel, was in the midst of assessing the damage. Officials declined to comment on costs, but Ray Neidl, who follows airlines for Blaylock & Partners, estimated the loss at \$10 million to \$20 million, "similar to what a very bad snow-storm would be."

Automakers said it still was too soon to estimate blackout related costs but expressed confidence that they will make up most of the lost production.

Kashmiris Queue Up for Mobile Phones



Srinagar, India, Aug 18 (AFP) - Hundreds of people swamped local telecommunications centres in Indian Kashmir in a scramble for application forms for a new mobile telephone service in the troubled state.

With the crowd becoming unruly, police used batons to maintain control, witnesses said.

"It was one of the most hectic days of my career," said Jabber Ahmed, an employee with state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), which will be providing the mobile phone service after Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee inaugurates it later this month.

In his traditional Independence Day address Friday, Vajpayee announced that long-awaited mobile telephone services would be launched in the restive state "next week."

AFP Photo

South Korea Tries Free Economic Zone Strategy

Seoul, Aug 11 (Herald Media) - Foreign residents may not feel so "foreign" in the years to come in this part of South Korea. Almost every aspect of their daily lives will meet international standards. From business operations and public services conducted in English to established foreign educational institutions, big-name department stores and world-class medical facilities, this new region will be offering a high-standard life to as many as 487,300 people.

This is the government's vision, anyway, of the three areas - Songdo, Cheongra and Yeongjongdo - in the port city of Incheon when they are completely developed into free economic zones by 2020.

On August 5 the government designated the three regions as South Korea's first free economic zones providing tax breaks, exten-

sive administrative services, and other privileges to foreign investors. This plan is part of the current government's ambitious goal of developing the nation into the business hub of Northeast Asia.

The special economic zones, covering 20,909 square meters of land, will exempt foreign investors from income and corporate taxes for the first three years of business operations, while in the following two years, they will be entitled to a 50 percent deduction on the normal tax rate. They will also be exempt from tariffs on imports.

Analyst's Take:

The Incheon free economic zones are partly an attempt to balance the advanced eastern and capital areas around Seoul and the underdeveloped western areas of the country. It

is similar to China's "Go West" program launched a few years ago.

Before former president Kim Dae Jung took office in 1998, efforts to develop the economy had focused on the area around the capital and the eastern regions. Kim built Incheon International Airport as a first step to develop the west, and new president Roh Moo-hyun continued the policy with a few specified rules, and a vice premier in charge of economic development led a special committee to provide preferential policies such as tax breaks to the free economic zones.

- Zheng Chenghong, director of South Korean Research Center, China Academy of Social Sciences

The free economic zones have been established because of fierce international competition. The average GDP

of South Korea reached US\$10,000 in 1995, but economic growth has been a lot slower in recent years.

Uncertain factors still exist for the three free economic zones. The service investment in South Korea is not good, and the high employment costs will be the biggest obstacle for foreign investment.

- Zhang Jinfang, Seoul (Xinhua)

Website Comment:

Top South Korean officials said China's rising economic position in Asia and its huge ability to lure foreign capital is threatening South Korea's economy, and given that Japan is also building new economic zones, something had to be done to shore up the economy.

- China Economic Information Network (www1.cei.gov.cn)

USA's New Money-saving Export: White-collar Jobs

August 5 (USA Today) - White-collar employees have long believed their jobs were safe from the economic forces that have shifted millions of factory jobs to foreign countries in the last 30 years.

But these days it's not just clothing and electronics being made by workers in India and China. Now, office and professional jobs are being shipped out, raising the specter that skilled white-collar workers could face the same devastating job losses that decimated the manufacturing industry.

Almost any professional job that can be done long-distance is suddenly up for grabs. Jobs done by financial analysts, architectural drafters, telemarketers, accountants, claims adjusters, home loan processors and others at higher levels of the labor food chain are being farmed out to workers in other countries.

"We're not just talking about call-center jobs, but all kinds of jobs," says Deloitte Consulting analyst Christopher Gentle. "It doesn't leave any part of the corporation untouched."

These include high-paying, highly sought-after jobs that often require advanced degrees and years of study to attain. But instead of paying six-figure salaries to trained workers in America, more companies are shelling out \$10,000 to \$20,000 to get cheaper employees an ocean away.

Major US companies, including such giants as IBM, Microsoft and Procter & Gamble, are leading the pack. Tens of thousands of jobs already have been shipped out, and analysts project that millions more will go in coming years.

Employers say outsourcing jobs to foreign countries makes them more competitive because they can reap

enormous savings in labor costs. They argue that most of the jobs now going abroad are positions many Americans snub, such as telemarketing. Farming out that work leaves better, higher-paying jobs for American employees to do.

The trend represents a potentially seismic shift. In the next 15 years, American employers will move about 3.3 million white-collar jobs and \$136 billion in wages abroad, according to Forrester Research. That's up from \$4 billion in wages in 2000.

Analysts' Take:

The international transfer of these office and professional jobs is an inevitable phenomenon, due to the pervasiveness of high tech.

As globalization continues and multinational corporations need to spread their markets, employing na-

tives of the countries they're aiming at seems to be more important and effective, as they know more about the culture and the consumers. For instance, Microsoft in China needs lots of software engineers to make their product locally.

As to the influence this will have in the US, I don't think it will have a strong negative effect on the US economy. These multinational corporations are spreading their positions in order to strengthen their global control. The more they invest abroad, the more profits they gain, especially when they can slash costs.

For china, it is a good thing. The shipping out of jobs will help promote intercommunication of both talent and technology.

- Liu Yuanchun, Professor, School of Economics, Renmin University

World Bank, IMF Pull Staff Out of Iraq

United Nations, August 20 (AP) - The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund pulled their staff out of Iraq on Wednesday after the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, which killed 20 people including the top UN envoy.

The IMF and World Bank are key players in efforts by the US-led coalition to rebuild Iraq's devastated economy. The two are expected to provide billions of dollars in loans to help restart the economy and banking system. Both had sent assessment teams to Iraq to start the process.

Five IMF staffers were in the UN building in Baghdad at the time of the explosion. Four are now in Amman, Jordan, after receiving treatment for minor injuries, IMF spokesman David Hawley said in Washington.

(Edith M. Lederer)



A passer-by walks in front of Vivendi Universal's corporate headquarters in Paris in this July 1, 2002 file photo. Reuters Photo

NBC Leads Vivendi Field Ahead of Key Meet

London/Paris, August 20 (Reuters) - US television network NBC is cementing its role as front runner in Vivendi Universal's show-business auction and could win exclusive negotiation rights as early as next week, sources familiar with the auction said.

Negotiations in the fast-changing auction are heating up between General Electric Co.'s NBC and media giant Vivendi in an attempt to fine-tune a multibillion-dollar merger proposal ahead of a crucial board meeting in Paris, the sources said on Wednesday.

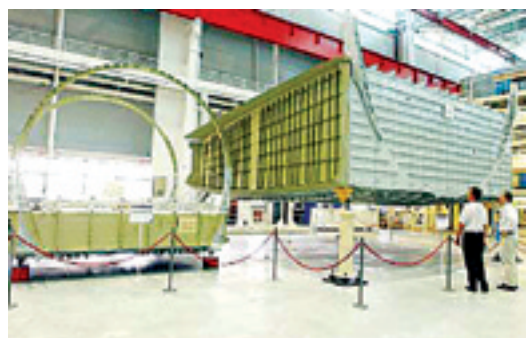
(Merissa Marr and Noah Barkin)

Brazil, India, China Push for WTO Farm Compromise

Geneva, August 20 (AFP) - Brazil, India and China led a group of developing countries in unveiling new joint proposals on how to reform global farm trade as negotiators raced to find a compromise weeks from a crucial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

"The intention of the proposal is to be as inclusive as possible, incorporating the concerns and interests of all participants," said a joint statement by the 16 countries supporting the proposal.

The plan, which comes a week after the European Union and United States submitted their own joint proposal, covers the so-called three pillars of agriculture that have been the hardest to resolve: market access, domestic support and export subsidies.



Airbus Unveils First Section of A-380 "Super Jumbo"

Nantes, France, August 19 (AFP) - European aircraft maker Airbus unveiled the first section of its future A-380 "super jumbo" - a colossal passenger jet that will eclipse the 747 from rival Boeing when it takes to the skies in 2005.

The section, a central piece weighing 11 tons to which the fuselage and wings will be attached, was presented at a ceremony attended by European VIPs in the Airbus factory in Nantes, western France.

Citibank Warns Customers of Phishing Scam

New York, Aug 18 (Reuters) - Citibank on Monday warned customers not to fall for an e-mail scam that threatened to shut down their checking accounts if they failed to provide their social security numbers.

Citibank, a division of Citigroup Inc., said numerous people received the e-mail, which purported to advise them of conditions affecting their accounts. It said the e-mail linked to a website that looks like Citibank's, and asked users for their social security numbers, a form of identification.

"Although the e-mail appears to come from Citibank regarding 'Your Checking Account at Citibank,' it does not, and Citibank is in no way involved in the distribution of this e-mail," a spokesman said. (Jonathan Stempel)



Four lucky prisoners emerge from a local prison last Friday.

Photo by Liu Xiaoling

Prisoners Allowed Home on Weekends

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Last Friday, ten convicts from local jails showed up at their homes in Beijing to spend the weekend, not following a prison escape but thanks to an experimental "holiday" policy being tried in the capital's prison system.

The seven men and three women from the Beijing Women's Prison, Beijing Juvenile Home and Qinghe Chaxi Prison were rewarded with the weekend breaks after showing good behavior during their times behind bars.

They left their cells on Friday morning and returned Sunday afternoon. According to the policy, one family member of each convict had to sign a guarantee at a local police station, promising to keep the prisoners under strict control, immediately report illegal acts or attempts to escape, and return them to their prisons as scheduled.

According to an official from the Beijing Prison Bureau who would not give his name, the holiday policy is intended to allow criminals to benefit from family unity in order to make it easier to eventually rejoin society.

This was the first time for Wang Xin (pseudonym), 48, the eldest of the ten, to leave jail following her original incarceration. Her eldest sister said, "I would never have imaged that prisoners would be allowed to have weekends at home. This new policy is very enlightened and humane."

Fancy Facility Draws Flak

By Lu Junying

A luxurious, high-tech public toilet that opened near Tian'anmen Square last month has met a large load of opposition, despite its impressive appointments. The main sticking point in the public mind seems to be the cost, as approximately 1 million yuan was dumped into the construction of the five-star facility.

"This toilet is really extravagant and a complete waste of taxpayer money," said one passerby who requested anonymity.

The toilet is equipped with a cutting-edge computerized monitoring system, with liquid crystal displays that show which stalls are being used, as well as more useful equipment, such as hand-scraped accessible areas and diaper-changing counters.

"In Beijing's current economic situation, it seemed absolutely necessary to improve the toilets near Tian'anmen Square," said Li Yongquan, director of the Dongcheng District Environmental Hygiene Management Bureau, which oversaw construction of the heralded head. He added that the facility is intended to be an image representative for the Chinese capital to domestic and foreign guests.

Cui Weitao, who has worked at the facility for seven years, opined, "This upgraded facility is the best in Beijing and worth the 1 million yuan price, but the problem is changing the public's ideas and getting them to realize toilets should not be dirty places."

Not everyone seems convinced. According to Zhou Xiaozheng, sociology professor at Renmin University, because China is still not wealthy, simply cleaning facilities well is preferable to setting up these kinds of expensive toilets.

The Dongcheng District bureau is reported to be considering giving similar facelifts to other public toilets around the capital's famed central square.



Photo by Hu Xuebai

Group of Pandas Set to Move from Crowded Home

By Lu Junying

Sixteen endangered giant pandas are packing for their imminent move to a better home in September.

The rare bears were born and raised at a facility in the Wolong Nature Reserve in Southwest China's Sichuan Province and are bound for the new Bifengxia Panda Base 300 kilometers away in Sichuan's Ya'an County.

Wang Pengyan, deputy director of the Wolong Nature Reserve Management Bureau, told *Beijing Today*, "The reserve only has the capacity to comfortably hold 30 pandas, but now we have 67 and they are all kept in one room."

He added that the outside area at the reserve's panda raising facility is too small. According to Wang, "The tight environs make it easier for infections to spread between the animals."

The new Bifengxia base is a veritable panda palace, occupying a huge area with enough outdoor area for 40 adult bears. The facility also houses a breeding field and a hospital and has been stocked with rich groves of bamboo.

"Each panda will get its own room at their new home," said Wang. "The new panda base will monitor the pandas and help them to gradually adapt to an environment very close to their natural living habitat."

The Ministry of Forestry has invested 27 million yuan to set up the Bifengxia facility, the world's largest giant panda base.

"At present, there are 16 sets of rooms for pandas to live in at the new panda base. This represents the first phase of our program, which will be completed at the end of this month," said Bifengxia Panda Base director Wei Rongping.



Born Swimmer

By Wang Xiaoxiao

On August 14, a newborn baby plunged into a closely-monitored pool and comfortably paddled around, demonstrating humans' surprising natural swimming abilities. The child, recently born at the Beijing Gynecology and Obstetrics Hospital, was the first Beijing baby to receive such early swimming training, supervised by Dr. Huang Xinghua.

According to Huang, more than

4,000 babies have undergone similar swimming lessons in hospitals in Guangdong Province. These post-natal swims have been proven to have beneficial effects on babies' quality of sleep, appetites and weight, while the water also stimulates their visual abilities and other senses.

"The temperature of the water should be kept around 40 °C, and the PH should be close to that of amniotic fluid," said Huang.

Butcher to Put Down Knife, Pick Up Books

By Dong Nan

Fate has taken a turn for the better for Lu Buxuan, who is contemplating giving up his job as a butcher and taking a teaching position in the Chinese language department of the Xi'an University of Engineering Science and Technology in Shaanxi Province.

He was invited to work at the university's new Humanities College last week.

Beijing Today first reported on Lu's situation on August 8. In 1985, he scored the highest marks on the university entrance examination of any student of his hometown of Chang'an in Shaanxi and ended up graduating with a degree in Chinese from Beijing University 1989. He then took a job at a factory, but when it went bankrupt, he was left with little choice but to eke out a meager living by opening a small butcher shop in 2000.

The domestic media picked up his story in late July, and within one week more than 50 colleges and companies from around China contacted him to offer him positions.

Last Thursday, according to Xi'an-based *Huashang Daily*, Lu had a meeting with Huang Xiang, vice president

of Xi'an University of Engineering Science and Technology, to discuss the possibility of working at the university. After the meeting, he told *Huangshang Daily* that the deal was "almost done", and he was "very satisfied".

In the meantime, the press attention given to Lu's business, called the Glasses Butcher Shop, has drawn the interest of the American corporation Tes. Company president Zhou Bin, a Chinese American, saw reports on Lu's story on the Internet and has since contacted him about possible cooperation.

"We are interested in the name of 'Glasses Butcher Shop', because through the Chinese media it has become famed throughout the country. We hope to develop it into a famous brand and a chain company," said Mr. Sun, a company representative.



Lu Buxuan (left) and his wife Chen Xiaoying talks with fellow Beijing University alum Wang Hongxin (center). Xinhua Photo

Dog Owners Urged to Vaccinate

By Zhao Bin

The Beijing Municipal Government has launched a massive campaign to control pet-born diseases by pushing all local dog owners to get their "best friends" vaccinated against rabies by August 31 at their own expense.

Following the release of orders from the Beijing Bureau of Agriculture on July 24, 100 authorized animal supervision agencies and veterinary stations citywide are requiring compulsory re-registration and vaccinations of dogs.

Zheng Ruifeng, vice-director of the Beijing General Veterinary Station for Livestock Husbandry, told *Beijing Today* that dog owners would be charged 60 yuan for the vaccination and reissuing of their yearly pet licenses.

According to the bureau's

order, dogs not proven to have received their shots can be confiscated and any animals suspected of having rabies will be quarantined and killed.

Dogs already vaccinated are exempt from the order, but owners must still provide documentation of the shots when reregistering their pets.

Zheng said, "All mammals are vulnerable to rabies, including cats, puppies and ferrets," and recommended the vaccination of all household pets.

The campaign is intended as a pre-emptive strike against rabies, as there have been no reported cases of infected animals in Beijing for five years, according to a statement made by Wei Haitao of the Bureau of Agriculture's animal husbandry and veterinary management office on July 25.

"Next Stop..."

By Ema Ma

Commuters on bus No. 728 got a great surprise last Friday evening when their ticket taker, Wang Baoli, 30, started making station announcements in English. The bilingual service, widely implemented on local bus lines, is intended to help foreign visitors get around and inspire Chinese passengers to pursue English studies as part of the extended build-up to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.



Bilingual Wang Baoli

Photo by Lou Qiyong

Race for Foreign Climbers

By Lu Junying

A climbing competition for foreign residents of Beijing will be held September 20 at the climbing wall set up by the Wind, Rain & Snow Outing Club inside Ritan Park.

The Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, which is organizing the competition, will offer participants climbing equipment and training sessions on September 13 and 15 at a price of 20 yuan per person per session.

All local expats aged 13 or older are welcomed to enter the vertical race and those interested should register before September 10. Curious climbers can get more information on the event by calling the club at 8562 3807 or by sending email to sales@e-outdoor.com.cn.

Qinzheng Palace Reopens in Fragrant Hills

By Chen Si

After undergoing 13 months of reconstruction, the Qinzheng Palace, an imperial building from the Qing Dynasty (1664-1911), reopened in Xiangshan Park (the Fragrant Hills) on August 6.

The palace was first built in 1745 under the reign of the Qing emperor Qianlong and destroyed in 1860 by invading British and

French forces. The original appearance of the structure has been fully restored, at a total cost of over 10 million yuan.

Xiangwuku, a ceremonial platform standing under the trees of the Fragrant Hills, reopened on the same day. To date, ten historic sites inside the park have been repaired and reopened to visitors, and more are slated for restoration.

Insured Against Drunk Driving?

By Chen Si

Tian'an Insurance Agency thought it had hit on a clever idea, but has stirred up a hornet's nest with its latest policy; perhaps because it's for drunk drivers.

The policy is intended to help injured third parties get their compensation. Following an accident caused by drunk driving, 70 percent of the compensation will be paid by Tian'an and 30 percent by the driver. So far, about 300 drivers have signed up for the policy.

In China, injured third parties often can't get compensation, either because the driver is too poor to be able to pay or has fled. China Insurance Regulatory Commission approved of the idea for insurance to cover this situation, as a means of protecting the rights of the third parties to compensation. But others have strong objections. Could this encourage drunk driving? Opinions follow:

Does it protect third parties?

Tian'an

Our purpose is to protect the third parties' right to compensation. Drunk drivers will still have to face administrative responsibilities and legal punishment, which cannot be lessened by insurance. So it will not increase drunk driving. No fool will hit a person on purpose just because of the insurance, as they will still face punishment.

Wu Feng, a traffic cop in Nanjing

This new insurance will encourage drunk driving. With the insurance, people who cause accidents will have to pay much less so they will be less vigilant. So the accident rate is likely to increase and there will be more third parties seeking compensation. How can we say this protects the third parties' rights? The new insurance does provide compensation for the third parties, but there will be more of them.

Hao Yansu, dean of department of insurance, Central University of Finance and Economics



A driver is receiving an alcohol test.

Photo by Photocom

It's ridiculous! I don't think the insurance will protect the injured third parties' rights at all. If the insurance agent really wants to protect the injured third parties' rights, they can ask them to buy relevant insurance themselves, but not the drivers. Actually, the best way to protect the third parties is to execute the law more strictly.

Ivy Lai, British, working for ING General Insurance International

In our country, there's no such insurance. As drunk driving is illegal, it can't be insured. The injured third parties usually have their own insurance, so if there's a traffic accident caused by drunk driving, they can get compensation that way. In China, I think there should be a better way to protect third parties' rights than insuring drunk drivers.

Legal or illegal?

Tian'an

Our purpose is not to insure the behavior of drunk driving, but the result

of this behavior. The compensation is paid by the driver and given to the injured, so we are doing a good deed for the injured third party who might not be able to get compensation otherwise. In addition, drunk driving is not actually illegal. It just violates the rules and regulations.

Mr. Zhao, Shenyang Public Security Bureau

I wonder if this is intended to protect legal or illegal behavior! Drunk driving is contrary to road ordinance in China. People violating this should be punished. After buying the insurance, the drunk driver's compensation bill much less than before, which makes the law less effective. What is the difference with assaulting someone, then saying "sorry" and getting someone else to pay for it?

Li Xuan, vice dean of department of law, Central University of Finance and Economics

The purpose of the insurance is not to protect the rights of drunk drivers

but the injured third party, so it's not against the law. Drunk driving and paying compensation to the injured third party are two different things.

To buy or not?

Zhang Jianming, driver for a company in Nanjing

I will buy the insurance. As I often have to attend dinner parties and drink at the party, buying such insurance will decrease the compensation I have to pay if I cause a traffic accident after drinking. The new insurance will put me much more at ease.

Zhong Weiping, a car owner in Beijing

I don't want to buy. It costs too much. Frankly, most people can control themselves even if driving after a little drink and cause few accidents.

Wu Zheng, chairman of a joint venture company in Beijing

Our company will consider purchasing this insurance. Drunk driving is unavoidable, as are accidents caused by drunk driving. If a company driver causes a traffic accident after drinking, the company has to pay damages. With this insurance, the company will have to pay much less.

Liao Mingyi, factory director in Nanjing

Our factory will not buy the insurance. Though we have different drivers and are at risk of someone driving while drunk, we still won't buy insurance for it. The reputation of the insurance policy is bad. If we buy it, people will think we condone drunk driving. It would be bad for the image of our factory and drivers.

Wang Xia, an employee of a company in Hangzhou

I hope drivers buy it. That way, if I'm injured in an accident, I'll not be worried about getting compensation. From the point of view of changes in society, more development means more automobiles, which also means more drunk driving and more injured third parties. If the injured can get compensation, it's a benefit for the innocent.

SOUND BITES

"Our system of national parks and forests is a trust given to every generation of Americans. By practicing good management and being faithful stewards of the land, our generation can show that we're worthy of that trust."

— US President George Bush, fresh from a week of appearances touting his policies, sought last Saturday to showcase his support for preservation of America's forests and national parks.

Bush said, with money either already approved at his request by Congress or that he intends to ask for in future years, nearly 1,800 park maintenance projects are either completed or on schedule.

The National Parks Conservation Association, an advocacy group, said Bush was exaggerating the progress. It said the administration has disguised the fact that it has supplied little new money to the effort, instead switching funds from other programs.

"Let them taste what we have tasted. Let them sit outside drinking tea and smoking cigarettes waiting for the power to come back, just like the Iraqis."

— Ali Abdul Hussein, a "Keep Cold" brand ice seller.

Iraqis who have suffered for months with little electricity gloated last Friday over a blackout in the northeastern United States and southern Canada and offered some tips to help Americans beat the heat.

From frequent showers to rooftop slumber parties, Iraqis have developed advanced techniques to adapt to life without electricity.

Daily highs have soared above 120 degrees F recently as Iraq's US administrators have been unable to get power back to prewar levels. Some said it was poetic justice that some Americans should suffer the same fate, if only briefly.

"This is democracy, but what kind of democracy? During Saddam's regime they (Iraq's police force) used to take bribes. I wish I was living in a desert rather than Baghdad."

— Hamed Hameed, who runs a warehouse, speaking yards from where minutes earlier armed youths had been fighting over prostitutes down a dirty, narrow street.

This is Baghdad four months after US troops took over the sprawling city of 5 million jobless, many of whom have been taking "freedom and democracy" as license to do pretty much what you want and get away with it.

Hamed complained that Iraq's fledgling new police force does little to intervene and the 36,000 US troops in the city don't know what's happening on the ground because they don't understand the language.

"This resistance is not a reaction to the American provocations against the Iraqi people or to the shortage of services, as some analysts believe ... but to kick out the occupiers as a matter of principle."

— An Iraqi man read from a statement.

A new group of resistance fighters, the Iraqi National Islamic Resistance Movement, said in a videotaped aired on the Al-Jazeera television network that they would battle the occupying troops even if the US-led coalition helps Iraq recover from war.

"This is something I've always dreamed of. Moments like that don't come around that often."

— England captain Michael Vaughan hailed the third Test victory over South Africa here at Trent Bridge as "the best match of my career".

England's victory by 70 runs gave Vaughan his first win as Test skipper after his reign started with a crushing innings and 92 run second Test defeat at Lord's.

"I'm obviously delighted to win the game and go to Headingley at 1-1 with Headingley usually a result wicket," said Vaughan.

"America is the number one target for many terrorist groups. Another September 11 style terrorist attack in the United States is highly likely."

— Guy Dunn, author of a report by the World Markets Research Centre (WMRC) assessed the risk of terror attacks in 186 countries around the globe.

The WMRC, which provides risk assessments for multinational companies, said its ratings of terror dangers placed the United States fourth and close ally Britain 10th.

Colombia, battling against leftist guerrillas and widespread kidnapping, topped the list, with Israel second and Pakistan third.

The country with the lowest risk of terror attacks was North Korea. "The country is so tightly controlled there is little opportunity for anything untoward happening," said Dunn.

By Chen Si

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The authorities in Nanjing have just come up with a regulation saying that people receiving government welfare cannot raise pets. The rule was included in the new "regulations for the guarantee of the urban population's minimum living level", which were passed by the Nanjing Civil Administration on March 7.

As reported in *Beijing Youth Daily* on August 8, 90% of the people who rely for their living on the welfare fund are now preparing to give up their beloved pets. The other 10% would rather abandon welfare so as to keep their pets by their side.

The regulation soon sparked a vigorous debate. Some agreed with it, saying the relief fund was to ensure a basic living for poor people and what the people on welfare get should not be frittered away on pets. These people felt that as the fund came from the nation's tax income, recipients should treasure the limited resource and use it for necessities.

On the other hand, those who don't agree with the regulation say it has never been specified what the fund should be spent on. They point out that life is not only about necessities. Also, the regulation doesn't give a detailed description of what a pet is. Does it include birds, goldfish?

An official of Nanjing Civil Administration who was not willing to disclose his name

Yes, we didn't give any specific details about the concept of a "pet", but we won't be so unreasonable as to take away a poor old man's little cat. We think of a pet as something requiring expensive maintenance. Some people who are not really that poor ask for the relief fund. And whether they keep pets is one standard to see whether they really need the money.

Anonymous clerk from a Beijing law court

It is the freedom of a citizen to keep a pet, unless he raises an animal illegally like a tiger, a panda or something dangerous to others. I don't think raising a pet has anything to do with the relief fund. That's why I can't understand the reason why this rule was carried out. Whether someone keeps a pet cannot decide whether they deserve the relief fund.

Madam Wang, a welfare recipient, Beijing

If they want to take my cat away, they are killing me. I have nothing but



Illegally-raised dogs are taken away.

Photo by Photocom

A Tax on Pets?

a cat. She is all I have. I only talk with her, because I don't think others are willing to talk to me. So if they take my cat away, I won't want the relief fund anymore either.

Wang Kaiyu, director of the technology department of Changcheng Machine Factory, Beijing

I think this rule has its reasonable side. But it's a pity the details haven't been explained. For example, what is a pet? They should give some standards to differentiate an expensive pet from little animals. Besides, the rule should also classify welfare recipients into different groups. Elderly people may need pets to relieve their loneliness; pets are sometimes an essential comfort to them. As to those who can work but still get money from the gov-

ernment, I think it's rational to ban them from keeping pets.

Ferry van de Pavert, a Dutch private doctor

I think poor people should get a bit of money to feed their pets. It is important for the animals but also for the keepers. Poor people are more depressed and a pet gives them happiness. For children it is very important to learn and share kindness and love with a pet. If poor people are not happy, they may consider criminal activities to survive and perhaps steal money to eat. A pet gives love and good company. In most countries around the world we train pets like dogs to guide blind people and to find drugs at airports and so on. As we recognize the importance of animals in our lives,

we should also respect animals even more and support poor people in feeding their pets.

Zhang Fan, professional worker, Beijing

I think the rule is unreasonable. A dog is not merely a pet for me. My dog "Chouchou" is like a family member. Do you think it's right to discard him when I'm poor? I'm alone right now, and Chouchou brings me happiness at home. As to what a pet is, I don't think a price standard is scientific.

Katy Lee, student at the University of Iowa, US

I really don't know much about keeping pets in China, but I would say people should be able to do whatever they want with their pet. If they want to keep it, they should keep it. If people on welfare want to share the limited amount of money they receive from the government with their pet, it's their choice. The people should be allowed to judge whether they can afford to keep a pet or not.

Lost in the Supermarket

Beijing Chain Companies Face Obstacles as Well as Advantages

By Dong Nan

Beijing residents are noticing more and more chains of supermarkets and restaurants on their streets. According to a survey released by Beijing Statistics Bureau earlier this month, chain commerce in Beijing has been developed significantly in recent years.

However, the survey, titled *A Report on Chain Commerce in Beijing*, also shows that there are still problems with the chain companies in Beijing, in particular the lack of sufficient capital to grow any further.

The survey is based on statistics from 139 chain companies in Beijing in 2002, with a reference to the successful experiences of Wal-mart, US, the largest retailer in the world, and Lianhua Supermarket, Shanghai, the biggest chain of supermarkets in China.

Statistics of the development of chain companies in Beijing, 2002

Number of companies	139
Number of outlets	2192
Gross sales value	32.62 billion yuan
Sales income	29.20 billion yuan
Net profit	0.41 billion yuan
Total employee	84, 000 people
Number of distribution centers	62
Transportation ability	34,344 tons

A notable improvement

In 2002, the number of chain companies in Beijing had grown to 139, with a total of 2192 outlets.

Ninety-two of the 139 companies were retailers, such as supermarkets, department stores and special brand shops; 47 were catering businesses like restaurants and snack bars.

Their total gross sales value was 32.62 billion yuan for 2002, 31.2% up from 2001; net profit was 0.41 billion yuan, 35.2% higher than 2001. Eight of the 139 companies had sales of more than a billion yuan in 2002.

Twelve of the 139 companies were listed in the top 100 chain companies of China in 1999, including the well known Wu Mart supermarket chain (Wu Mei Chao Shi), Chaoshifa supermarket chain, Gome Electronic Equipment (Guo Mei Dian Qi) and Jing Ke Long Corporation.

The total number of employees of the 139 companies in 2002 was 84,000 people, 7.6% more than in 2001.

Tang Hongyan, an official of the Beijing Statistics Bureau told *Beijing Today* that it was thanks to "favorable policies instituted by the municipal government" that chain store companies had seen such rapid growth.

In June 2002, Beijing Commercial Committee released a document called *To Develop Chain Business More Rapidly*, which included schedules for the development of chain companies and offered many incentives including low interest loans and a more convenient administrative procedure for open units. A special office for management and research into chain business was also set up by the committee.

"What impresses me most is that Wu Mart now has 349 outlets. It is really an impressive number. Some of these companies have even



opened branches in Macao, Paris and Moscow," Tang says.

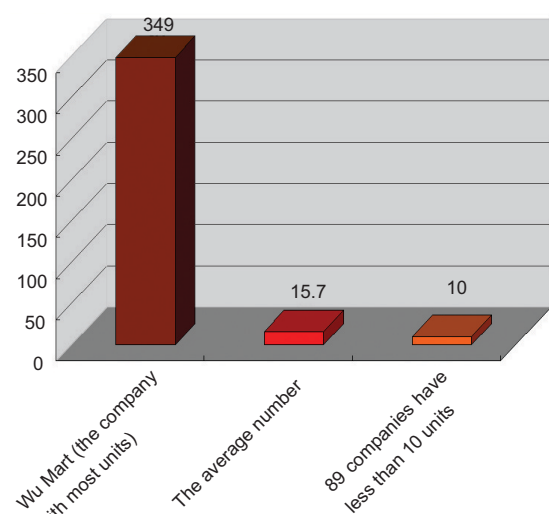
However, problems also exist.

Too small

The survey shows that 64% of the chain companies in Beijing had less than 10 units in 2002. For example, Wan Long Zhou Seafood Restaurant has three branches and Yan Jing Grand Hotel has but two branches.

Many of the chain companies also make relatively little money; in 2002, 25 of them had a gross sales value of lower than five million yuan.

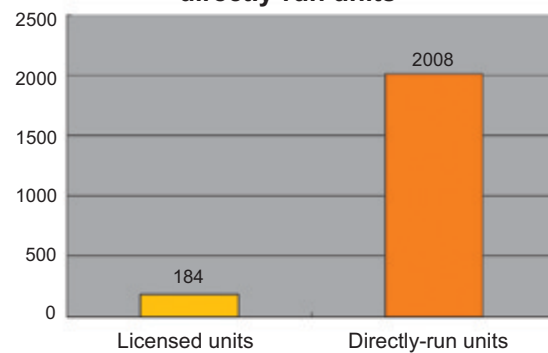
Number of outlets



Lack of capital is the main problem for these companies. Without capital, they cannot afford to open more units. Many of them are small-scale restaurants. Besides, the relatively lower level of management and information systems is also a restrictive factor, says Tang.

"Usually, a chain company can only run at a profit when it owns at least 14 units; in China the number is 10," says Tang. "By opening

Number of licensed units and directly-run units



more units, a company can reduce its costs and improve its position in competition."

Few licensed units

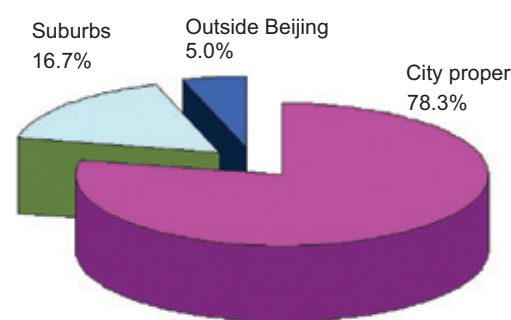
A common method of establishing chain companies is for a company to offer its brand as well as technology and training to a small scale business which will in turn provide money and human resources. The small business then becomes a licensed unit, a new outlet in the chain. This method involves lower costs, less risk and more speed in setting the whole thing up.

However, in 2002, there were only 184 licensed units in Beijing, just 10% of the number of units run by companies directly. For example, 7.9% of Wu Mart supermarket branches were licensed units, and only 3.3% of Capital Union Group's branches were run this way.

"Licensed units offer more freedom of management. But there are shortcomings as well as advantages," says Tang. Many companies in Beijing are afraid that small businesses are hard to control, and could damage the reputation of the company, so they forsake the advantages of licensed units.

The quality of many of the small businesses seeking to participate with larger companies is

Proportion of the distribution of units



also a concern.

"There are often a lot of problems with stores that apply to participate with Wumei, including location, investment and the quality of the owner," says Duan Weiqiang, director of the Development Department, Wu Mart Supermarket.

The right strategy

In 1962, Wal-mart opened its first store in Rogers, a small town in Arkansas, US. Wal-Mart adopted a strategy of developing in areas where it didn't have many competitors, before expanding.

The experience was also adopted by Lianhua Supermarket. As it started to grow larger in 1996, Lianhua shifted its focus to the suburbs of Shanghai to occupy areas where there was little competition.

However, by 2002, 78.3% of the chain units in Beijing were located in the city proper, with only 16.7% far out in the suburbs.

"There's a large number of competing stores and restaurants in Wangfujing and Xidan, while in the suburbs, there are not enough chain units," says Tang. "That's because many chain companies were rebuilt or reorganized on the basis of old stores and marketplaces that crowded into the city proper. They have not had enough time to expand into the suburbs yet."

Not-so convenient stores

"I can't get the things I want in the shop near my home, so I have to walk for 20 minutes to the supermarket every four days," Liu Rui, a housewife living in Haidian district complained to *Beijing Today*.

"Compared to large supermarkets, it should be possible for the local convenience stores in communities to cater for residents. Besides, they are more flexible and involve lower costs," says Tang.

In 2002, there were only 11 convenience store chain companies in Beijing — such as Lianhua Quick and Wanfang Guangjia — nowhere near enough to satisfy demand.

Along with the city's growth, especially around the fifth and the sixth ring road, more and more communities have been built that provide a market for convenience stores. According to the survey, 4,000 such shops are needed in Beijing.

Opportunities and suggestions

In July 2003, a new raft of favorable policies was released by Beijing Commerce Committee. For instance, companies running convenience stores can now enjoy a discount on loan interest rates.

"These shops should focus on fresh foods and semi-manufactured foods, to make them the local 'refrigerator' for residents," Tang suggested on the basis of her research. "Their location should be in downtown areas, and in communities as well."

Small and middle-size chain companies which are not able to afford more units are also being encouraged to unite with each other, or join larger and stronger companies to emerge on a larger scale more quickly. The government also wants to encourage the development of more licensed units.

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Mustard Gas Still Poisoning Chinese

Lengthy compensation lawsuit to come for Chinese victims

By Shan Jinliang

China and Japan were supposed to be celebrating the 25th anniversary of their historic *Peace and Friendship Treaty* last week, but instead a row broke out over compensation after construction workers in Qiqihar, Heilongjiang, accidentally dug up Japanese wartime mustard gas canisters which led to 43 people becoming dangerously ill.

It was supposed to be a double anniversary as people were also preparing to celebrate the 58th anniversary of Japan's surrender to China on August 15, 1945.

But after five migrant workers were taken to hospital with a mysterious complaint on August 4, it soon became clear that the much reviled gas technology used during the war by Japan was the reason for their illness. The number of victims jumped to 43 within the next 18 days before local authorities had successfully contained the contamination.

Lethal canisters dug up

On August 5, doctors trying to diagnose the five victims' illness gained a vital clue from relatives of two of the victims, Wang and Li. They said the two men had purchased five iron barrels unearthed at the Beijiang Garden community construction site. When they cut open the barrels in order to sell the pieces off as scrap metal, dark red liquids inside which smelled of strong mustard and garlic leaked out. Soon, the men were experiencing sore eyes, itchy skin and slight faintness.

Authorities soon realized the problem could grow far worse as polluted soil from the construction site had been dug up and bought by local residents and companies to fill up their yards and gardens.

The number of victims rose to from five to 22 in the next 24 hours, as the city government and the local military scrambled to contain the problem.

Even after all these years, the mustard gas remained horrifyingly potent. Xinhua News Agency reported that Gai Xunxu, a primary school student developed blisters on his feet just by playing on some of the contaminated soil. So far the oldest victim is 58 years old, and the youngest is a 9-year-old girl named Gao Ming.

Doctors at the No. 203 Military Hospital, which was treating the patients, warned that more victims could emerge in days ahead, because symptoms of mustard gas can take up to one month to appear.

Expensive treatment

Qiqihar government has already allocated 500,000 yuan to cover initial medical expenses, president of No. 203 Military Hospital Sun Jinghai told CCTV on August 16. However, with medical costs now estimated at 100,000 to 150,000 yuan per day, this amount is far from enough. Sun said he was unable to predict how much the treatment would cost, and said none of the victims would be able to pay for their treatment. One victim, Niu Haiying, said Japan should foot the bill. "We were hurt while Japan and China are supposed to have friendly relations. The Japanese should take responsibility for this."

A delegation of lawyers from Beijing led by Yucheng Law Firm arrived at Qiqihar on August 15. "The Japanese compensation should cover medical treatment and compensation," said Wang Junzheng, one of them, "Japan should be responsible for continuous treatment, including mental damage to the victims and their relatives."

Hospital president Sun said some victims would need skin transplant operations. He also mentioned they would incur substantial loss of earnings while receiving treatment, and said some victims might not even be able to work again.

Japanese medical delegation offers help

The Japanese government admitted on August 12 that the bar-



Li Guizhen is still in a critical condition, despite some positive signs.



rels of mustard gas had been left behind by the Japanese army during World War II, and it extended its condolences to the Chinese victims.

Two days later, a six-member Japanese team arrived in Qiqihar to help deal with the construction site and contain the spread of the pollution. On August 16 another Japanese group arrived in the city to offer medical assistance to Chinese doctors.

On August 17, the number of victims peaked at 43. The next day, Qiqihar city secretary Yang Xin announced to the press that the mustard gas pollution had been brought under control.

More gas weapons waiting to be dug up

Meanwhile, in a different part of China, an accident resulting from another Japanese wartime weapon was narrowly averted. On August 14, another gas bomb was found in Changsha, Hunan Province. It was successfully disposed of by bomb experts from local police and the National University of Defense Technology.

Such gas bombs and mustard gas barrels produced by the Japanese army have been discovered all over China ever since the war. Since 2001, 775 bombs and artillery shells and 28 gas containers have been discovered in Qiqihar alone, according to Xinhua.

Bu Ping, vice president of the Academy of Social Sciences of Heilongjiang Province, said no accurate estimate of the number of chemical weapons still littering the Chinese countryside has yet been made. Japan still has not provided detailed information on the scale of its chemical campaign in China, he said. Existing and incomplete statistics suggest that around two million chemical bombs were left in China after the war, scattered over ten provinces. Bu said he felt the Japanese government should consult veteran soldiers of the war and provide more detailed information to China about this.

The two countries have jointly conducted 14 investigations into abandoned Japanese chemical

weapons to date, but not many of the weapons have been properly disposed of. Xinhua said on August 18 that there were two reasons for this. One is that it would take the equivalent of tens of billions of US dollars to dispose of all the abandoned chemical weapons in China, and the other is that some Japanese groups and organizations still refuse to ac-



knowledge the fact of abandoned chemical weapons, and have rejected the responsibility of carrying out disposal work.

Kong Quan, spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, called on the Japanese government on August 12 to handle the chemical weapons issue properly.

The Japanese government has said it would cope with the acci-

dent in an appropriate way, but Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has raised doubts over just how much compensation will be paid, suggesting China should cover some of the costs.

Some hope

Gao Hong, a researcher from the Japan Institute, China Academy of Social Sciences, says more than 2,000 Chinese have been victims of abandoned Japanese chemical weapons, but nobody has been compensated.

Gao said that though the Chinese government rejected the claim for postwar compensation in 1972, Chinese residents have the right to claim compensation individually, but it would take a long time for ordinary Chinese victims to get anything out of the Japanese government. Gao did concede, however, that the Japanese response to this latest incident had been particularly positive.

On August 17, a team of Japanese lawyers seeking compensation from their government

for Chinese victims of bacteria warfare during World War II arrived in Beijing. They agreed to coordinate their efforts with Chinese lawyers in the fight for compensation.

Three mustard gas victims were discharged from hospital on August 18, but two victims are still in critical condition. Lawyer Su Xiangxiang told Sina.com on August 15, "The two are relying on a mixture of antibiotics to stay alive since their immune systems have collapsed."

Su said the Japanese court dealing with the case plans to made a judgment on September 29, on the anniversary of China and Japan signing the *Sino-Japanese Joint Statement* in 1972, which exempted the Japanese government from paying war compensation. The court has already indicated that recent chemical weapon accidents are not covered by that statement, raising the possibility of compensation, added Su.

Photo by Photocome

Kazakhstan, China Fight Terror

By Shan Jinliang

Just as the vehicle carrying four terrorists and their hostages arrived at the border checkpoint between China and Kazakhstan, an armored car blocked the way. Dozens of soldiers in black jumped out of the bushes, broke the windows and jumped into the vehicle.

Shots were fired, and in less than a minute the terrorists had been subdued. But no-one got killed in this engagement. That's because it was a military exercise conducted by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), set up in Shanghai on June 15, 2001.

The SCO was set up by China, Russia and, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to coordinate military activities in border areas and help contain separatist terrorist movements.

The exercise consisted of two phases, the first in Kazakhstan and the second in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in China. The drill concluded last Tuesday.

China's minister of National Defense Cao Gangchuan, along with military leaders of the other member countries inspected the troops after the drill and praised their success. Cao, also vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission and a state councilor, said the drill had been the first multilateral exercise for SCO members.

Long-term plan

China's proposal to hold a



Members of Kyrgyzstan's special team

Xinhua Photos



Joint forces rescued mock hostages in a practice strikes on August 8.

joint anti-terror military drill, which it raised in November 2001, was welcomed by the other SCO members. Defense ministers of the five countries signed a memo on May 29, 2003 approving holding the exercise in Kazakhstan and China.

The drill, named "Coalition

2003" involved 1,300 soldiers, including Russian infantry and a special team from Kyrgyzstan.

During the first stage of "Coalition 2003", more than 1,000 soldiers from Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan launched a mock battle to rescue air passengers taken hostage by a gang

of international terrorists.

At 11:18 am Beijing Time, August 8, a gang of supposed international terrorists hijacked a plane and tried to fly it from Kazakhstan to China. Two Kazakhstan fighter planes forced the hijacked plane to land 30 minutes later, and the terrorists got into a vehicle and fled with five hostages.

At 12:10 am, the terrorists arrived at the checkpoint with China before being ambushed by the security forces.

In the second stage on August 11 to 12, Chinese forces practiced hostage-release techniques and the destruction of a terrorist base in Xinjiang. Over 100 "terrorists" fought against the coalition troops consisting of army, air force and armed police. The street fight lasted only a few minutes before the terrorists were pinned down.

Impressive success

A Chinese official who helped conduct the drill told Xinhua on August 12 that the coalition military forces shared information, operated a unified commanding system and got familiar with each other's command systems through the drill. He said it would lay useful foundations for upgrading the SCO anti-terror system.

Cao Gangchuan said the success of the drill would worry terrorist forces in border regions, and would help in safeguarding the area's stability and even world peace.



Still Chasing Birds

By Zhang Huan

Tang Damin's love for pedigree pigeons began when he and his brother started collecting its rare species in their family's courtyard in the 1940s. The changes that soon swept across China made it hard for him to maintain his hobby, but now that Beijing is home to numerous pigeon fanciers, he has rediscovered his love for the birds.

Along with the two other creatures traditionally kept and admired in Beijing, goldfish and Pekinese dogs, rare pigeons have flown back into town. 63-year-old Tang Damin sees the birds not just as pets or a hobby, but part of traditional Beijing culture. He wants to help people understand the history of these creatures and help preserve the endangered rarer species.

Memories of childhood

Tang began collecting rare pigeons when he was five or six years old. At that time, his father was the general mechanical engineer of the waterworks at Dongzhimen, so his family lived in a big courtyard inside the waterworks. Tang's eldest brother was already a pigeon fancier but because he was still studying, his parents did not allow him to waste any time with pigeons. Tang was the youngest child of the family and was in poor health so the parents always took more care of him and were more indulgent. Tang's elder brother craftily persuaded his parents that Tang was interested in pigeons so they agreed to collect some. As it happened, Tang soon did become enthusiastic about the birds.

Keeping and breeding pigeons was very popular in Beijing at that time, among all the different social classes. There were a number of pigeon markets around the city and pigeon dealers were so numerous they had to apply to the government for a business license.

The pigeon keepers all specialized in different species. Tang's eldest brother kept a famous species named Duanzuidianzi, which was known as the "Palace Pigeon", as it was fussy about its food and environment. The brothers kept 60 to 70 pigeons, which at that time was an extravagant amount. Tang remembers one of their pigeons once flew away and was lost. The family asked some local pigeon dealers to look for it. Later they were informed that a rickshaw puller named Zhao had found the bird. "We paid him 30 silver yuan to get the little pigeon back. It was a large amount of money at

that time. A sack of flour imported from the US weighing 25 kg would have cost 2.5 silver yuan and a rickshaw man like him would only have earned one or two silver yuan a month at most."

A unique species

After liberation in 1949, there were a lot of changes in social conditions. The hobby of keeping pigeons greatly diminished and many precious species died out. The drive to rid Beijing of pests in the late 50s required the shooting of sparrows, but pigeons were caught up in the cull too. And during the Cultural Revolution, when "feudal" habits were frowned upon, rare pigeons would be killed and eaten. Tang had to abandon his hobby completely. Later, from 1975 till 1980, Tang started keeping homing pigeons but he found it less interesting. "The homing pigeon is from abroad while the breeding of beautiful rare pigeons is part of Chinese culture. The background, the form of appreciation and the affections are different. I don't know if it has something to do with my age. As I grow older and older, I feel more and more that we should celebrate our own things."

Tang returned to keeping rare pigeons. And because there were few pedigree species available, he began breeding them by himself. Chinese pedigree pigeons have certain particular characteristics. The head should be round, with wide red eyes and a short and blunt beak. The other distinctive feature is the coloration and specialist breeders like to produce birds with certain colors in certain areas. It's an art, demanding not only scientific knowledge but a lot of perseverance.

"Only after I began breeding pigeons, did I realize how difficult it must have been for people in ancient times who had no genetic knowledge to help them breed so many distinctive species. They realized it by relying only on their imagination and perseverance," Tang says. But the process is also exciting. "Before seeing the baby pigeons emerge, the feeling is a mixture of expectation, anxiety and suspense."

Tang now has about 100 pigeons of 16 different species and he has become well known among pigeon fanciers. He is especially proud of two species. One is Tiechidianzi, a strain he created himself, and the other is Duanzuiziyuchi, which attracted 86-year-old Wang Shixiang, a famous scholar and pigeon lover, to come and see Tang's collection. "The happiest thing for me is that

after seeing my pigeons, pigeon fanciers and scholars have noted that I am preserving precious species that are of rare quality."

The only hobby

"I used to work in a sales department and every day I had to cycle over more than 50 kilometers to many different places, but I insisted on feeding the pigeons by myself unless I came back home too late," says Tang. "I put on the work clothes, the mouth mask and gloves and fed them and then cleaned the pigeon house. My tiredness was immediately relieved when seeing the birds."

Keeping pigeons excludes all other hobbies. In his spare time, Tang visits pigeon markets. To buy

value. Hiding his excitement, he calmly bargained with the man and at last bought back the pigeon for 50 yuan. "The pigeon was lost at the age of three and a half months. Now after three years, I finally got it back. I was so happy."

A few words of advice

"Pigeons are fairly compliant," says Tang. "If they're not, control the amount of food you give them. When they are hungry, they will take the initiative to come back to the group. The male pigeon is attached to his young and the female is attached to her eggs. So to make a male pigeon get used to the new environment, you should find him a mate and when he has his babies, he will not leave.



Feeding the pigeons is a routine full of fun for Tang. Photos by Txtsuma

The homing pigeon is from abroad while the breeding of beautiful rare pigeons is part of Chinese culture. The background, the form of appreciation and the affections are different. As I grow older and older, I feel more and more that we should celebrate our own things.

— Tang Damin



(Below) Tang now has about 100 pigeons of 16 different species at home.



a pedigree bird, he will spend all the money he has on him. "Unfortunately, it's hard to find good pigeons on the market now," he says.

In 1997 and 1998, because his wife was ill, Tang went to live in the countryside with her for two years. And he brought with him all his pigeons. The villagers there often lit firecrackers and one day one of his precious birds was frightened and flew away. Tang asked people to search for it and went to many pigeon markets to look for it, but without success. Tang knew that if somebody who had a little knowledge about birds found it, they would not give it back.

However, the impossible happened this year. Tang went to a pigeon market in the countryside, and among a group of homing pigeons on sale he suddenly saw his lost pigeon. "I bred the pigeon myself. I saw it every day so I remembered every feature of it. Its image had been carved in my mind." Tang asked the price, and the seller said 70 yuan. Tang immediately realized the seller had no idea of the pigeon's true

value. And for a female pigeon, make her hatch her own eggs."

Tang says breeding pigeons is just like raising children. "You devote your energy and effort to them and finally they grow into a handsome boy or a pretty girl. As a parent, you will feel very happy."

Though the pigeons have given Tang so much joy, he cannot help worrying about the future of rare pigeons. "China has a unique pigeon culture and there used to be more than 200 species of Chinese rare pigeons, but now only 50 to 60 species are left. If we do not take action now, the existing species could die out."

Tang tried setting up a pigeon farm with a friend in the suburbs of Beijing but he had to close it down due to lack of money. "The biggest difficulty for me is that I don't have enough money for breeding pigeons and cannot buy pedigree species. Now I am in my sixties but I still have energy and enough experience. If the government would like to preserve and breed Chinese pigeons, I can still do something to help," says Tang.

Mystery of the Ba Kingdom

By Sun Ming

"Ba Cultural Festival" was held in Xuanhan County, Sichuan Province, last week, attracting archaeologists and media from all over China.

The festival was organized to mark the excavation of newly discovered tombs of the ancient Ba civilization at the Luojiaba archaeological site.

The Ba Kingdom, renowned for the great bravery and skill of its warriors, emerged around 4,000 years ago in today's eastern Sichuan Province, Chongqing, and western Hubei Province. It disappeared mysteriously about 2,000 years ago, posing an enigma to archeologists,

discoveries, unearthed in May, has attracted the most attention.

"The spectacular No. 33 Tomb contained the largest quantity of Ba relics ever unearthed. It is probably the burial place of one of the rulers of the mysterious Ba Kingdom, more than 2,500 years ago," said Chen.

Inside the tomb, which measures thirteen by nine meters, Chen and his colleagues found three human skeletons, one male and two females. The archaeologists believe these are probably the remains of servants or slaves, buried with the king as human sacrifices.

However no trace was found in the tomb of the remains of the person for whom it was



簠(fu), bronze sacrificial vessel



戈(ge), bronze weapons

who had been hired by his institute stole seven bronze vessels from the tomb. The theft, however, quickly came to light, prompting the Sichuan institute to send a team led by Chen Zujun to further excavate the area.

Ancient bronze vessels, bronze weapons such as spears, daggers and swords, pottery pieces, stoneware and fragments of wild boar jawbones and teeth were among the more than 200 artifacts found in the tomb, which was excavated from May 5 to July 23.

"The tomb contained 15 bronze sacrificial vessels, which usually only appeared in the tombs of an emperor or imperial official of that period," said Chen. He and his colleagues say the presence of such articles suggest the tomb belonged to a ruler of the Ba Kingdom. "But we can't say so definitely. Any such conclusion requires solid and ample evidence."

Earlier time frame

"Actually, the Luojiaba site was first excavated in 1999. Since then it has been viewed by archaeologists as one of the most important Ba archaeological sites," Chen said. Farmers dug up several bronze swords by chance in 1984, and in 1996, the National Cultural Relics Bureau gave the go-ahead for the site's excavation.

From September to November 1999, an archaeological team organized by the Sichuan institute made the first excavation at the Luojiaba site, unearthing six small tombs. On March 13 of this year, the second excavation was launched and archaeologists uncovered a further 26 tombs. Most relics excavated there were bronze ware swords, lances, daggers and arrowheads.

According to the archaeological team, the tombs were all of soldiers and ordinary people of the Ba Kingdom dating back to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) and the early and mid Warring States Period (475-221 BC). In contrast, most previous archaeological findings relating to the Ba people in other places date back to during or after the Warring States Period.

"The discovery of the Luojiaba



Local people inspect the contents of Tomb No. 33 at Luojiaba

Photos by Xiang Lin / Ye Yaoming

ba site is a remarkable breakthrough for researchers of Ba culture, and has led to a revising of the dating of the Ba period," said Chen. To now, he and his colleagues have unearthed some 600 artifacts from the 33 tombs in all.

Xiang Shihe said, "Actually, the best way to protect relics is to leave them underground, but controlled and organized excavation is necessary in order to carry out research," adding that the residential areas and other tombs will not be excavated in the near future.

"We are looking forward to unveiling more mysteries surrounding Ba culture through the research of the relics from Luojiaba site," said Xiang.

Mysteries remain

There are still few archaeological findings that can bring to light the origin and culture of

the Ba people. But some relics people found in eastern Sichuan Province, western Hubei Province and Chongqing have revitalized the study of ancient Ba culture.

"The history of the Ba is a history of war — most of the bronze wares unearthed were weapons and other tools of war," Gao Dalun, director of the Sichuan institute told *Beijing Today* last Thursday.

During the Warring States Period, the Ba Kingdom lay between the Kingdom of Chu in the east and the kingdom of Qin in the north, the two most powerful kingdoms in China at that time.

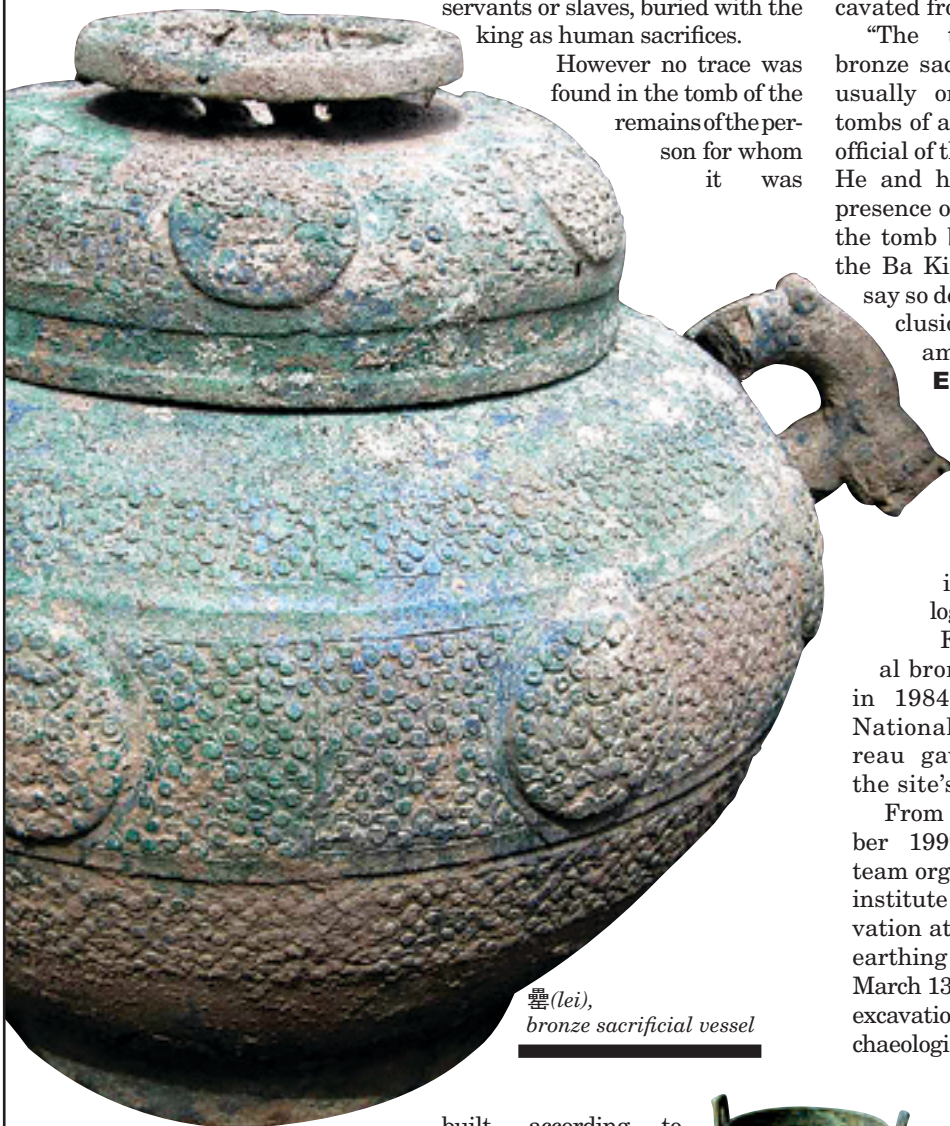
"There were often battles between them, but the brave Ba people were immensely skilled in making weapons, and it was the quality of weapons that often determined the outcome of battles,"

said Gao.

However despite this advantage, the Ba Kingdom disappeared around 2000 years ago. Gao said that to date, there is insufficient evidence to explain this disappearance, but many archaeologists believe that it was conquered by the Qin Kingdom, which under the leadership of Qin Shihuang, eventually united China under the Qin Dynasty.

"Many remains of Ba soldiers, showing evidence of sword or arrow wounds, were found in the tombs at Luojiaba. I think the excavation may help us find how the kingdom was extinguished," said Gao.

Gao added that many artifacts unearthed at Luojiaba correspond to the style of Chu, Qin and Central China cultures, indicating that the Ba people must have had frequent exchanges beyond their borders.



罍(lei), bronze sacrificial vessel

who have so far been unable to explain its downfall.

"The relics at Luojiaba will help us gain a deeper insight into the life and culture of the ancient Ba people," Chen Zujun, an archaeologist with the Sichuan Provincial Research Institute of Archaeology, told *Beijing Today* on Monday. Chen is also the head of the team of archaeologists that have been excavating the Luojiaba site.

Tomb of a ruler

Among the 33 tombs found at Luojiaba, the most recent of the

built, according to Xiang Shihe, director of the Xuanhan County Relics Institute. The tomb had already been partially destroyed by thieves. "We found some pieces of a skeleton beside a river 50 meters from the tomb," said Xiang, "They might be from the principal occupant."

In an interview with *Beijing Today* last Wednesday, Xiang said that the tomb would not have been discovered in May if it had not been raided by thieves on April 27 this year. Two workers



鼎(ding), bronze sacrificial vessel

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Keeping Up with the Cyber Joneses

By Yu Shanshan

Throughout China this year, conspicuous consumption has leapt from the confines of high-end shopping malls and into people's computer and mobile phones. The conduit for this jump is QQ, an Internet-based instant messaging service popular nationwide that now allows users to virtually shop for clothes, accessories and backgrounds for their cartoon cyber alter-egos, purchases that end up costing real money.

The enterprise capitalizing on this virtual shopping spree is Shenzhen-based Tencent Company, the operator of QQ. As part of that service, users can select images to represent themselves that appear alongside messages they send or when they participate in on-line games.

Since January, Tencent has been dealing virtual face and making real money by running a store, called qqshow, on its website. At this shop, users can create complex, completely customized images for a small fee per item.

The idea for virtual shopping was borrowed from South Korea (ROK), where instant Internet messaging is massive and firms first allowed customers to change their characters' clothes while talking online. Tencent has expanded the idea and through its online store, QQ users can choose from 1,500 items of clothing, 60 male and 60 female faces, 200 hairstyles, 150 accessories and 600 backgrounds, such as natural scenes, cars, pets and homes to create their own ideal virtual images.

Even though most items come at costs a few units of "Q money" (1 Q bill is equal to 1 yuan), the service has proven wildly successful. Tencent was able to recoup its investment in qqshow in just the first three

months of its operation, despite a complete lack of advertising.

More recently, according to the company, 100,000 new shoppers a day have been checking out the nearly 1 million items offered on qqshow's electronic shelves.

Xu Liang, qqshow project manager, attributes the rapid spread of the new service to the nearly 40-million strong base of QQ users in China. "Everyone who uses qqshow ends up advertising our service. They show off their unique images, and then their friends get jealous and want ones of their own," he told *Beijing Today*.

At least 20 items, created by Chinese and overseas designers, are added to the virtual store's shelves each day. The imaginary goods can be roughly divided into three categories: luxury items that people want but could never afford (such as a



Ferrari convertible or private jet); things people would not dare to wear in real life (mini-skirts and capes); and fantastic goods sprung straight from designers' imaginations that have no real-life equivalents.

"The key message we're trying to send is, 'Be somebody else, and show your imagination'," added Xu.

Many young QQ users under 25-year-old have become hooked on qqshow and thrown thousands of yuan of real money at fully outfitting their online images. Zhang Yan, 20, who works in a pet shop in Shanghai, said she spends three



to four hours online at the qqshow shop each day, trying on and adding new items to her virtual wardrobe.

The service seems to particularly appeal to young men. The service's homepage includes a list of the first "QQ millionaires", meaning oicq users that have spent the most money on their cyber images. Of the top 24, 18 are young men, and almost all of them have spent surprising amounts of money to create studly images poised in front of gleaming sports cars and flanked by scantily-clad babes.

According to Xu, nearly twice as many males engage in qqshow shopping as females. "Our designs for boys' clothes are cooler than those for girls, and most of our designers are men," he explained.

Longtime QQ user Jin Jian, a 24-year-old university psychology major in Chibi, Hubei Province, spends around six hours a night qqshow shopping. "So far, I have a huge, luxurious collection," said Jin, who has paid 8,000 yuan for virtual fashions since March

and ranks third on the "millionaire list".

He continued, "I like this a lot better than the old version [of QQ], which only had a few faces, because you can compete with your friends and see who's got the most style — that's better than merely talking nonsense."

Others are attracted to the idea of attaining things about which they can only dream in real life. Fang Qiang, 25, a blood tester at a neighborhood hospital in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, has shelled out 7,000 yuan to purchase 408 items of clothing, 16 choices of hairstyle, eight faces, 50 cars and 10 houses, all of which he can assemble as he likes. "It's a way to compensate for my boring life," he told *Beijing Today*.

A 38-year-old housewife from Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, whose QQ nickname is Katherine, said, "For me, qqshow is a way to make up for some real regrets in my life. I had a baby when I was 32, and my body has never gone back to how it looked before. But in

qqshow, all the bodies are slim and I can choose the kinds of dresses that I like, ones that show my waist."

A few less narcissistic users enjoy using qqshow as a way of showing affection for family and friends and Q money has become a popular gift. Tian Meng, secretary at a real estate company, received more than 100 dresses and a stash of diamonds worth over 500 yuan from friends for her birthday on July 4.

More advanced services are also available, such as an online photo studio that allows qqshow users to take "pictures" with other oicq friends.

Yet there are many QQ users not drawn to the qqshow lifestyle, dismissing the service as a waste of time and money. Even manager Xu Liang falls into this category — he confessed he only has "five or six pieces of clothing" for his online image.

Some frugal users, such as Wei Bing, an 18-year-old Beijing high school student, have found ways to exploit the system by only grabbing clothes that are offered for free. She said that the appeal of QQ is being able to chat with her friends, not to have a virtual closet filled with 500 digital dresses she would not have the time to look at, let alone enjoy.

Regardless of skeptics and Q penny pinchers, qqshow appears to have a promising future. Management at Tencent bill it as a service, not a product, that can be adjusted according to users' wishes.

"From our online forum, I have seen that users hope we will offer more fantasy projects, upgrade the photo studio to allow groups of people take pictures together, and provide more space for them to show off their online images and their newest stuff," said Xu.

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By Dong Nan

Theater lovers have a smorgasbord of drama and opera to look forward to this autumn.

The first Beijing International Drama Season, running from September 27 to October 14, will present more than 50 productions, including drama, melodrama, pantomime and puppet shows, as well as traditional Peking, Kunqu, Shaoxing and Huangmei opera.

The festival was announced at a the press conference last Friday, and is co-sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the Beijing municipal government.

Opening with the Croatian National Theatre production of *Aida*, the festival will feature a performance by Beijing Opera Theater's *Zhangxie Zhuangyuan* (*Zhangxie, the Top Scholar*), the first Peking Opera, and two different productions of *Zhaoshi Gu'er* (*Zhao, the Orphan*), by Beijing People's Art Theater and the National Theater.

It will conclude with the first performance in China of the Irish dance extravaganza, *Riverdance*.

Autumn Theater Festival Announced



Riverdance

Rock Review



New Pants

By Dong Nan

Three punkish-looking cartoon characters in jeans and sneakers, reclining in poses more usually associated with the subjects of paintings by Botticelli or Ingres – that is the cover of New Pants' self-titled debut released in 1998.

The image spoke volumes about the style of the band: fresh, ironic, deconstructionist and definitely somewhat hip.

From the opening bars of the first track, *I'm OK*, it was clear that the Ramones figured prominently (if not exclusively!) as an influence. One track is actually titled *You are My Ramones* (*Ni shi wode Leimengsi*).

Subsequent albums, 2000's *Disco Girl* and *We Are Automatic*, 2002, saw a gradual broadening of the band's musical horizons, away from punk, in

the general direction of new wave.

"I would like to enjoy everyday painful," a line from the hit single, *Everyday*, from the first album, might best sum up the philosophy of singer/songwriter Peng Lei: It is better to endure the pain and despair of existence with courage and optimism than to simply escape, an idea that seemed to resonate with many of their fans.

Line up:

Vocals, Guitar: Peng Lei
Guitar: Li Yanfei
Bass: Liu Bao
Keyboards: Pang Kuan

New Pants (1998)
Recommendations: *Women de Shidai* (*Our Era*), *Meiyitian* (*Everyday*)

Disco Girl (2000)
Recommendations: *Disco Girl*

We Are Automatic (2002)
Recommendations: *Fashion 1983*, *Follow Me*



Renowned movie and TV star Chen Daoming was named ambassador for the Tianwang Watch brand at a press conference at Beijing International Club Tuesday.

A Moment in Stef Sun's Life

By Dong Nan

Malaysian pop singer Stef Sun releases a new album today. A collection of new and best-of tracks, the album, titled *The Moment*, is her sixth since her debut in 2000.

Speaking about the trouble she had choosing which tracks to include on the album, Sun said at a press conference last week that it was a difficult task because all of her old songs mean a lot to her.

She also revealed that as a result of the pressure of pop stardom, she was planning to step out of the spotlight for at least one year, to give herself some space to consider her future.

"I think it is 'the moment' in my life now. I need to think about what should I do next," the 25-year-old girl said.



WORLDWIDE



Nicolas Cage

Toronto Film Fest Promises Plenty of Star Power

The Toronto International Film Festival pledged on Tuesday to deliver plenty of star power, with Nicolas Cage, Nicole Kidman, Denzel Washington and Meg Ryan set to help the city shake off a SARS and blackout-induced slowdown.

Unveiling the final lineup for the Sept 4-13 event, organizers said the recent SARS outbreak failed to scare off stars or filmmakers and ticket sales were already ahead of last year's record levels.

"The fact they're here is obviously for us a great sigh of relief," Toronto festival director Piers Handling told reporters.

(Reuters)



Mike Gordon

Phish Bassist Arrested for Child Endangerment

Phish bassist Mike Gordon has been arrested in New York and charged with both endangering the welfare of a child and trespassing in a closed area.

He was arrested August 11 at a concert by the Dead at Jones Beach's Tommy Hilfiger Theater in Wantagh, after police were alerted that a nine-year-old girl was missing. The child was later found with Gordon in a boat-house near the backstage area of the venue, for use by state employees only.

(Reuters)

Broadway Stages Its First Deaf Musical

For the first time, a musical featuring deaf performers is being staged on Broadway, and the show — a revival of *Big River* based on Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* — is drawing big crowds.

All the lines and songs are both voiced and conveyed in sign language in the production which stars deaf actor Tyrone Giordano as Huck and Broadway veteran Michael McElroy as runaway slave Jim.

The pioneering mixture of hearing and deaf actors sails along thanks to precise planning and abundant talent in a show that also bucked theatrical currents by moving eastward from Los Angeles after first being staged at the 66-seat Deaf West Theater and then at the Mark Taper Forum.

(Reuters)



Aaron Neville

Aaron Neville Explores 'Nature' of Jazz Standards

Anyone who recalls Aaron Neville's rendition of *Star Dust* on Rob Wasserman's 1989 album *Duets* or Neville's cover of *These Foolish Things* on his own 1993 collection *The Grand Tour* recognizes that the New Orleans singer knows his way around a standard.

So Neville's Verve album *Nature Boy: The Standards Album*, which arrives August 26, will please fans of the versatile vocalist who have always longed to hear him wrap his distinctive pipes around more tunes from the great American songbook.

"Me and my brother Charles have been talking about doing some stuff like this for a while," Neville says. "We were just waiting for the chance. Ron Goldstein came up with the idea."

(Reuters)

Harrison Ford Guest for French Film Fest

Harrison Ford will be the star guest at next month's Deauville film festival and director Roman Polanski will preside over the jury, organizers said Tuesday.

Ford, 61, is to attend the festival in the exclusive Normandy resort to promote his latest movie *Hollywood Homicide*, an action comedy directed by Ron Shelton. The 29th edition of the festival, which honors American cinema, is to take place September 5-14.

This year, organizers plan to introduce a new documentary competition. Oliver Stone's *Persona Non Grata*, about Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, and *The Agronomist* by Jonathan Demme, about a Haitian journalist and human rights activist, are in the running.

(Reuters)



Harrison Ford

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Sweet Sheets

By Dong Nan

From the outside, the store Joy Studio (Xifang Jiaju) seems ordinary, but the inside is like a beautiful bedroom, warm and comfortable and outfitted in a rainbow of colors.

The store specializes in bedding, sheets, comforters and the like, all made of 100 percent cotton for top comfort at very fair prices. A set of two pillowcases, one quilt cover and one bed sheet goes for only 148 yuan, at least 100 yuan cheaper than similar quality items at major department stores.

The bedding comes in a wide range of colors and patterns, each accorded its own descriptive name. "Purple Beauty" has elegant violet flowers on a white



background, while "Lovers on the Lake" has bold blue, green and teal stripes, contrasting the vivid pink flowers of "Flaming Seasons".

Customers can pick material they like and have linens made to order at a price of 35 yuan per meter of cloth (processing fee including). The store can also

make customized curtains and car or sofa covers, including free on-site measurement to make sure the items fit.

Pre-made pillows are sold in a myriad of colors and patterns, many with cute shapes. One looks like a bone (98 yuan) and another a like fat octopus (38 yuan), but there are also more elegant options, such as pillows made with hemp fiber and decorated with old-fashioned hand-sewn embroidery (73 yuan). Even better for curling up or snuggling is a selection of soft, fun stuffed animals, priced between 10 and 80 yuan each.

Where: North of Anhuizhao, Asian Games Village (Yayuncun), 300 meters south of Yangguang Piaoliang Guangchang **Open:** 9:30 am - 10 pm **Tel:** 6497 2427



"Drawer boxes", 50 yuan



By Yu Shanshan

The two Lanti Magic Stores, run by the father-son magician team Ti Yueli and Ti Mai, stock all sorts of supplies for aspiring David Copperfields or anyone looking to impress their friends. Tricks are available in a wide range of types and prices for all skill levels.

The easiest of the tricks rely simply on the props to provide the magic. Along these lines is the drawer box (50 yuan), that can magically make anything put inside disappear, with minimal effort by the illusionist. A similar but more expensive trick is the dice bomb (200



"Marvellous brass coin boxes", 300 yuan



"Sponge balls", 150 yuan

Tricks of the Trade

yuan), in which one large playing die, easily visible in a transparent box, explodes into eight smaller dice.

Tricks involving money are sure to get a rise out of any audience. A seemingly simple one is the "looking sharp pen" (480 yuan). First the magician borrows a bill from the audience, and then stabs it with the ordinary-looking pen. While the bill appears pierced from all angles, when the pen is removed, the bill is completely intact.

For the "flying coin" trick (60 yuan), the magician makes a coin provided by someone in the audience vanish in his or her hand. The coin is then magically transported to a small bag inside a two-layered plastic container - the audience can even hear the sound when the coin lands inside!

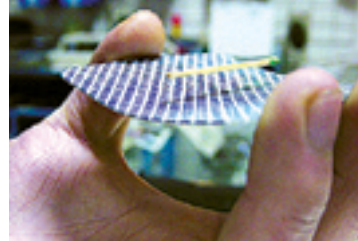
The Ti's happily provide entertaining demonstrations of the store's merchandise. But, as magicians, they are very cautious about



Ti Mai demonstrates a coin trick. Photos by Wang Wei

giving away their secrets and only give customers full explanations of how to use any trick after purchases are completed.

Where: No. 15, Erqi Theatre Road, Fuxingmenwai, Xicheng No. 49, Xisinan Road, Xicheng **Tel:** 6803 8158 (home number) **When:** 10 am - 8 pm **Website:** <http://www.lantimoshu.com>.



"Floating match on card", 50 yuan



"The chess", 880 yuan



"Jewelry box", 650 yuan

Photos by Txtpuma

Time in a Box

By Chen Si

Round, cubic, rhomboid...boxes of all shapes and functions show up at stand No. 4075 in Yaxiu Market. They can hold all sorts of things, books, paper, playing cards, writing brushes and pens, with real style, as all are reproductions of antique boxes.

A small jewelry box (650 yuan) made of wood and covered in ox hide has a rich historic feel with three drawers with bronze fixtures. Its red cover is painted with the Chinese symbols of dragons and phoenixes as well as maidens, and is topped with a

decorated mirror that can be folded up for use or tucked safely away.

This box has another surprise inside, as it is lined with paper from an ancient Chinese almanac, used in the past to predict the future and find auspicious days for certain important events, such as harvest or weddings.

Another interesting small box stands out because its cover houses a compass surrounded by a brass disk with carved Chinese characters, a reproduction of an ancient tool used in Chinese divination. Among the words written on the brass piece are those for the traditional five elements, metal, wood, water, fire and earth, along with the eight symbols of the Yi Jing, called the ba guo. This mysterious box sells for 240 yuan and makes a fun gift.

Chess fans and history buffs are certain to enjoy another item, an unusual and expensive chess set that goes for 880 yuan. The case for the set is covered with a golden dragon design, while the pieces are all bronze-cast images of characters from China's Three Kingdoms period of nearly 2,000 years ago.

Where: No. 4075, Yaxiu Market, Sanlitun, Chaoyang District **Open:** 9:30 am - 10:00 pm **Tel:** 13691110515



Photo by Aily

Handspun Fashion

By Lao Mi

The two-story store Buyan Buyu, which stands directly across from the north gate to Worker's Stadium, has one of the best shop windows in the city, featuring eye-catching displays of its unique and colorful clothing creations.

Inside, the store is informal and comfortable, filled with soft light and music. Buyan Buyu's specialty is handmade clothing, most of which is designed by the two owners, who have been running the store for nine years. The

majority of garments for sale are made of linen or flax and in limited runs, meaning there are only a few of each kind.

Designs tend to be interesting meldings of traditional Chinese styles with foreign influences, such as jackets with collars inspired by Japanese kimonos. Many of the garments have floral motifs and most sport swathes of brightly-colored cloth. The new autumn collection is now hitting the shelves and customers that do not find what they want can have clothes made to order. Prices average around 200 to 800 yuan per item.

A low stand near the west side of the store houses an eclectic collection of attractive, reasonably-priced jewelry, including a few pieces brought back from Tibet. There is also a small selection of shoes, mostly straw sandals and quasi-traditional Chinese cloth shoes.

The back room of the store has been fashioned into a small bar with wooden chairs, lots of loose magazines and tranquil music, making it a great place to tired shoppers to take a load off.

Where: Buyan Buyu, No. 12, Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang **Open:** 10 am - 10 pm **Tel:** 6415 9442

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By Xiao Rong

The cuisine of Hunan Province is one of the eight major schools of Chinese cooking and well known within this country and abroad, mostly for its liberal use of spice. Yet the ancient culinary tradition of this region of central China has far more to offer than just heat.

The Yangzi River, which runs along the north of Hunan, has been a major influence on the area's cuisine, providing food and irrigating the area's fields. As a result, the province is known among the Chinese as "the home of rice and fish (yumi zhixiang)", two ingredients that have particularly prominent places in the cuisine.

There are three main branches of Hunan cooking based on different geographic areas, specifically the Xiang River region, Dongting Lake region and western Hunan.

The best known of those is food from the Xiang River region, home to the cities of Changsha, Xiangtan and Hengyang. This cuisine is known for heavy doses of oil and strong flavors like hot and sour. Another characteristic is the use of smoked ingredients in dishes that are steamed or stir-fried.

The cuisine of the Dongting Lake region is marked by generous use of fresh poultry and fish. A famed dish that makes use of these ingredients is *zhengbo luzi*, a mixture of special local materials cooked in a clay pot.

Due to the presence of the Miao and Tujia minority people, food from Hunan's western regions, called *xiangxi* cuisine, has a more exotic quality. Main ingredients include Hunan's famed *larou*, or smoked meat, and wild game.

Smoked meats, such as pork, chicken and fish, and generous use of hot peppers are two elements that unify the different kinds of Hunanese cooking. Neither of those ingredients is unique to the province, but Hunan's versions are different from their equivalents from Sichuan or Jiangxi and generally very tasty. Popular heat sources in Hunan are *duo lajiao*, pickled red chilies that are spicy, salty and delicious, and *bai lajiao*, seasoned sun-dried green chili peppers that make a perfect accompaniment to larou or chicken giblets.

Fermented soya beans, or *douchi*, are a special product of Hunan that turn up in many dishes. While Sichuan and Hubei Provinces also make these savory, salty beans, the best-known douchi in China come from Hunan's Liuyang county.

Of course not all Hunan dishes are spicy — perhaps the most famous exception is *hongshaorou*, pork braised in soy sauce that was the favorite food of Chairman Mao. Another mild choice is Dong'an chicken (*dong'an ji*), made by braising chicken pieces in a brew of vinegar, Shaoxing wine and spices.



Fiery Hunan-style hotpot at Xiang Chang Xiang

Photos by Aily / Che Qingjiu

Hooray for Hunan

Zaoyuanju Restaurant

By Shan Jinliang

The Zaoyuanju restaurant is high in the running for most elegant Hunan eatery in Beijing, as it is set in a historic *siheyuan*, or courtyard, under the shade of a 100-year-old jujube tree.

Restaurant manager Huang Yanling told *Beijing Today* that almost all ingredients used, especially peppers and other flavorings, are shipped up from Hunan. Among the very authentic items on the menu are Liuyang black sheep, the star of house special flour coated stewed mutton (*fenpi dunyangrou*, 48 yuan), a delicious and nourishing dish devoid of offensive mutton odor.

These specialties are delicious and nourishing, an emphasis of the kitchen echoed in other dishes such as marinated pig foot (*zibu jiang zhushou*, 32 yuan) and hand-torn turtle (*shousi xiaobie*, 18 yuan each), made with famed Dongting turtles that are so soft that their shells are also edible.

The waitstaff also recommend choices from the stone pot series, such as stone pot fish (*shiguo yu*), chicken (*shiguo tuji*) or bullfrog (*shiguo niuwa*), all priced at 48 yuan. The dishes are tasty, but a bit skimpy for the money. A more filling and economical selection is the oily and satisfying small fried pork (*xiao chaorou*, 26 yuan).

Add: No. 21, Andeli Beijie, Dongcheng **Open:** 10 am - 9:30 pm **Tel:** 6425 7242, 6425 6859 **Price:** 50 yuan per person



Stone pot bullfrog (shiguo niuwa, 48 yuan)

Liujiaguo Restaurant

By Xiao Rong

The Liujiaguo restaurants were certainly not the first Hunan-style restaurants in the capital, having opened in 1999, but have emerged as one of the best known, especially among non-Hunanese.

That is not to say that the Hunan dishes at the two Liujiaguo branches in Beijing are not good, but the management has remolded some traditional aspects of the cuisine to meet local tastes. In fact, the most popular dish, clay pot carp (*bu'er shaguoyu*, 36 yuan) is not even from Hunan.



Diaoziyu, 36 yuan

"This is a favorite among non-Hunan diners. It's not spicy, and the soup is the most delicious part," said manager Liu Yukun.

For fans of heat, Liu recommends the chicken fried with spicy sauce (*laoganma jiaojigong*, 36 yuan) a simple mixture of red chili peppers and tender chicken in a delicious secret sauce. Another Hunan special is *diaoziyu* (36 yuan), a type of smoked small fish only produced in the province. The fish are cooked in a rich sauce until their bones are so soft they can be eaten and the meat is highly flavored.

One Hunan-style dish perhaps not available anywhere else in town is the frightening-named sour and spicy pig blood balls (*suanla zhuxue wanzi*, 28 yuan). The dark red balls of congealed pig blood are sliced and taste a bit like dried tofu, but with a smokier flavor. These morbid treats are matched nicely in terms of color and taste by pickled beans and green garlic leaves.

Add: No. 19, Nanheyuan Street, 300 meters north of Guibinlou Hotel, Dongcheng **Tel:** 6524 1487

No. 12, Yumin Zhonglu, the first floor of the North Third Ring Road Hotel, Xicheng **Tel:** 8207 8488 **Open:** 9:00 am - 12 pm **Price:** 50 yuan per person

Xiang Chang Xiang

By Sarah Bai

Nestled among the trees of Tuanjieshu Dongli near the Chaoyang Gymnasium stands Xiang Chang Xiang, a little restaurant that serves up some pretty good Hunan food. The house special is Hunan-style hotpot that backs up the province's reputation for mouth-blistering heat levels, and a wide range of dishes of mixed authenticity is also available.

There are nearly 20 kinds of hotpots offered, each of which has one or two star ingredients and comes to the table already cooked. All versions, from spicy fish (*xianglayu huoguo*, 48 yuan) to mountain sheep (*heishanyang huoguo*, 58 yuan), are topped with a layer of rich, spicy oil and filled with enough stuff to comfortably feed two or three people. The usual hotpot additions are available

in heaping portions, as well as a few surprises, such as the delicious, chewy tea tree mushrooms (*chashugu*, 10 yuan). At Xiang Chang Xiang, the hotpot is so flavorful no dipping sauce is provided and can be ordered by spice level, from mild to outrageous.

In general, the other dishes are tasty, but many do not stand out. The ever-present pork braised in soy sauce (*Maoshi hongshaorou*, 18 yuan) is available, as is a selection of smoked meats, including dog and rabbit. One of the better dishes is twice-cooked pork with dried tofu (*huiguorou chao xianggan*, 15 yuan), a spicy mix of crisp slices of fatty pork with meaty, flavorful pieces of dark dried tofu. Fans of spicy crawfish owe it to themselves to try this restaurant's version, called *kouweixia* (28 yuan). The crawdaddies here come decapitated and deined, making them among the cleanest around, in a mild, sweetish sauce that allows the natural flavor of the tail meat to shine through.

The interior of Xiang Chang Xiang is comfortable and tastefully simple, while service ranges from clueless to quite attentive. This summer, the restaurant has opened a popular outdoor area that offers nice fresh air, but suffers from being on the roadside and having a prominent downward slope.

Add: No. 10 Tuanjieshu Dongli, Chaoyang **Hours:** 11 am - after midnight **Tel:** 8596 6628 **Price:** 45 yuan per person



Fish head with pickled chilies (duojiao zhengyutou, 48 yuan)

Quyuan Restaurant

By Joel Kirkhart

The Quyuan Restaurant is one of Beijing's more reputable Hunan eateries, as shown by its acknowledgement as a "China's time honored brand". After decades of operation in the Xidan area, this restaurant moved next to the Guobing Hotel outside of Fuchengmen a couple years ago, and is rumored to be preparing to move again. That could be good news because the restaurant's paltry decor and bored service detract from the generally tasty food.

The menu is extensive but pretty simple, offering all the

best-known Hunan dishes with a few surprises thrown in. Portions are generous and prices relatively low.

A good judge of a Hunan kitchen is the fish head with pickled chilies (*doujiao zheng yutou*, 48 yuan), and Quyuan's version explains its reputation. The fish is steamed to flaky perfection in a sauce that is buttery and not too spicy, despite the presence of plenty of fresh *duojiao*.

Another impressive version of a Hunan standard is the smoked bamboo shoot with smoked meat (*yansun chao larou*, 24 yuan), in which the dark bamboo is tender and tasty with a flowery fragrance and the meat exceptional, smoky and chewy, much better than that served in most local restaurants. Bitter melon with fermented black beans (*douchi chao kugua*, 10 yuan) also comes recommended, even for those who dislike bitter melon, as its namesake taste has been somehow removed, and the dish comes out fresh, crisp with a nice salty bite from the fermented beans.

Add: Fuchengmenwai Dajie, next to the Guobing Jiudian, Xicheng **Hours:** 6:30 am - 12:00 am **Tel:** 6831-8519 **Price:** 40 yuan per person



Boiled bamboo shoots (shuizhu yansun, 22 yuan)

By Wang Xiaoxiao

In Beijing, Hunan cooking has never gained the same kind of following as Sichuan cuisine, but is still popular, particularly among spice lovers. While there are almost no major Hunan chains in the capital, there are plenty of smallish, independent restaurants worth investigating, some of which are listed below.

Xiaoxiang Tower

Add: 42, Beiwai Road, opposite south gate of Youyi Hospital, Xuanwu **Tel:** 8316 1188 **Open:** 11 am - 2 pm, 5-9 pm

Cai Xiang Gen Restaurant

Add: 9 Yuetan South Road, Xicheng **Tel:** 6802 1707 **Open:** 11 am - 9 pm

Shaoshan Mao's Restaurant

Add: 150 meters north of Grand Hotel, Hualong Street, Dongcheng **Tel:** 6512 9110 **Open:** 11 am - 10 pm

Xiang'eqing Restaurant

Add: Jia 2 Dinghuisi, Fucheng Road, Haidian **Tel:** 8813 5388 **Open:** 11 am - 2 pm, 5:30-10 pm

Xiangjunfu Restaurant

Add: Southwest corner of Guang'anmen Overpass, 1 Nanbinhe **Tel:** 6328 7777 **Open:** 11 am - 2:30 pm, 5-9:30 pm

Makai Restaurant

Add: Di'anmen Wai Avenue, Dongcheng **Tel:** 6404 4889 **Open:** 11 am - 2 pm, 5:30-10 pm

Sports

War tunnels, a lost village and the gold mines

This hike starts with old, unused guerrilla war-tunnels dug to resist the Japanese. Then the group will visit an old, mostly deserted village, meet some shepherds, and see some deserted mines.

Where: gather outside Lido Starbucks **When:** August 24, leave 8 am, return by 5:30 pm **Admission:** 150 yuan (adults), 100 yuan (children under 12) **Tel:** 13701003694 **Email:** huilin@hjikers.com

Extreme Coaster

The Beijing Amusement Park in Longtanhu, five kilometers south of Tian'anmen Square, has recently added a 24-meter-high tipper coaster to its ranks of live shows, rides, paddleboats and bumper cars. Also check out the souvenir stores, restaurants and snack bars.

Where: 1 Zuo'anmen Street, Chongwen **When:** daily, 8:30 am - 6:30 pm **Admission:** 70 yuan for all facilities except tipper coaster (20 yuan per ride per person) **Tel:** 67143611, 67146909

Stage

Xiangshou Jiannan (Enjoy Hardness)

Han Huigu, a young boy with a girl's name, comes to Beijing from Ningxia on his own and encounters a series of difficulties he must overcome.

Where: Chinese Children Theater, 64 Donganmen Dajie, west of Wangfujing **When:** August 22-24, 7:15 pm **Admission:** 40-60 yuan **Tel:** 6406 8888, 6406 9999

Copenhagen

The National Theatre Company of China presents Michael Frayn's Pulitzer and Tony award winning play, about the mysterious circumstances surrounding Werner Heisenberg's visit to Niels Bohr during the height of Nazi power. Translated into Mandarin by Hu Kaiqi.

Where: People's Art Theatre, 22, Wangfujing Dajie (behind Capital Theatre) **When:** August 22, 23 7:15 pm **Admission:** **Tel:** 6403 1099



Copenhagen

Jams

A Day of Punk

Eight punk bands including Joyside, Another Idea, Unsafe, Recycle and Last Chance for Youth take the stage starting in the afternoon, followed by six bands including Suffocation (Zhixi), Slough Body (Fushi) and Mirage (Haishishenlou) in the evening.

Where: Get Lucky, 500 meters east of the south gate of the University of International Business and Economics, Chaoyang **When:** August 23, 1 pm, 9:30 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6429 9109



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By Dong Nan

Music

Lang Lang, hailed as a piano prodigy, will give a solo concert next weekend.

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** August 31, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-880 yuan **Tel:** 13911131344, 13681100448

Peace of Music

The Beijing Do Re Mi Children's Chorus will perform *For The Beauty of The Earth*, *We Want A Peaceful World*, *Jingle Bells* and more. Conducted by Zhang Yida.

Where: National Library Concert Hall, 33 Zhongguancun Nandajie **When:** August 24, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 10-60 yuan **Tel:** 8854 5731

Children's Concert

The Beijing Solar Youth Symphony Orches-

tra will perform selections from *Swan Lake*, Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg* and more under conductor Jiang Xiongda. The next day, the Youth Chorus from the China Symphony Orchestra will perform *Ziyou Song* (Carol of Freedom), *The Blue Danube*, Tosti's *Marchiare* and more.

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall, inside Zhongshan Park, West Chang'an Avenue **When:** August 23, 24 7:30 pm **Admission:** 10-60 yuan **Tel:** 6559 8285

Performances



Beijing Opera

Zhangxie Zhuangyuan (Zhangxie, the Top Scholar), a traditional Beijing Opera based on a story over 1,000 years old.

Where: Beijuchang, Beibing-masi Hutong, 67 Jiaodoakou Nan Dajie **When:** August 22-24, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 30-200 yuan **Tel:** 6406 8888, 6406 9999

Dance: Liba Qiang de Yingzi (The Fence's Shadow)

Zao Hua is a village girl who struggles to become a strong, independent woman after divorcing her no-good husband. Based on the famous TV series *Liba*, *Nuren*, *Gou* (Fence, Woman and Dog) and *Lulu*, *Nuren*, *Jing* (Windlass, Woman and Well). Performed by the China Song and Dance Troupe.

Where: Poly Theatre, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** August 22, 23, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-800 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188 ext. 5126

Activities

Summer Smoke 2003

This Saturday, the new Beijing Cigar Club is set to host the first of its monthly cigar evenings, featuring local distributors of cigars, cognac, port, and wines.

Where: John Bull Pub, 44 Guanghua Lu **When:** 7 pm, August 23 **Admission:** 250 yuan (includes two top-quality cigars and samples of food and liquor) **Tel:** 6532 5905

Parties

Vibrate and Bark

Steve Barker gets a little room to play at Vibes tonight. Reggae, dub, dancehall and funk are on the menu, but expect anything and everything. Backup by Chan- chan DJ Mother-man.

Where: Vibes, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Dashanzi **When:** 9 pm August 22 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6437 8082

Tsunami 2003

For Beijing's one and only annual beach party, DJs Bobby, Usami, and Slab will all pile into the City Seaview Waterpark, where partygoers are encouraged to get wet and wild. Bring your own beach towel.

Where: City Seaview Waterpark (Haijing), Capital Airport Fulu Road (Jichang Fulu), about 6 km north of Dashanzi Huan-ao **When:** 10 pm August 23 **Admission:** 100 yuan includes one vodka drink **Tel:** 6431 0885

Travel



Green Tours to Yanqing

Enjoy a late-summer holiday in the town of Yanqing for beautiful sightseeing, delicious food and fun song and dance performances.

Where: Longqingxia, Yanqing County, north of the city **When:** till August 30 **Admission:** 160 yuan **Tel:** 6406 8888, 6406 9999

Movies

Chujing (Position)

Directed by Hu Ze, *Chujing* (78 min, 1999), was screened at the 2000 International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam.

Where: NOW Design Club 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, 786 Art District **When:** August 22, 7pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6438 5938

Cherry Lane: Searching for Shangri-La, Part 1 (Xunzhao Xianggelila)

Laurence J. Brahm is in danger of succumbing to existential crisis thanks to conversations with pop singers at Starbucks. He decides to travel to Tibet and wander amongst the stark beauty of Buddhist temples and yak butter sculptures in search of enlightenment. Filmed by experimental director Yang Tao. In English with occasional English subtitles.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies Fountain Terrace, Hilton Hotel, 1 Dongfang Lu, East Third Ring Road **When:** August 22-23, 7 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan (in-

cludes one drink) **Tel:** 6466 2288 ext. 7370, 13901134745

Lü Cha (Green Tea)

This eagerly-anticipated film joins the forces of stars Zhao Wei and Jiang Wen under the leadership of independent filmmaker Zhang Yuan in a relaxing and low-key love story. In Mandarin.

Where: Local cinemas **When:** August 22-28 **Admission:** 40-50 yuan

Forbidden Games

A young orphan loses both her parents and her pet dog while fleeing the Nazis during World War II. She is befriended by a local farm boy, and together they decide to create a pet cemetery, using grave markers from a nearby human cemetery. This causes discord between rival farm families, and threatens the children's new-found friendship. Directed by Rene Clement. In French with English subtitles.

Where: Space for Imagination, 5 Xi-wangzhuang Haidian **When:** August 23, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6279 1280



Exhibitions

Works by Li Lianwen, Kai Xin and Others

An exhibition of contemporary oil paintings by ten artists, including Li Lianwen, a member of the Chinese Artists Association, and Kai Xin, a member of the International Calligraphy Association.

Where: Yun Zhou Gallery, Room 8, 1/F Kempinski Hotel, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu **When:** daily 10:30 am - 10:30 pm, till August 28 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6465 3388 ext. 5735



Painting by Yuan Yaomin

Four Artists Exhibition: Yuan Yaomin, Liu Liping, Pan Ying, Liu Liyun

Yuan Yaomin, a Hebei native who trained at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, uses images in her oils that mock what she feels is a male-centric ideal of feminine beauty. Liu Liping, Pan Ying and Liu Liyun also star in this show. The artists will give a talk on August 24 at 2 pm, and the show is open daily from 10 am - 5 pm.

Where: Red Gate Gallery, Dongbianmen Watchtower, Chongwenmen **When:** through September 10 **Admission:** 10 yuan **Tel:** 6525 1005, 6528 4317

Portraits

Oil paintings by established artists including Yang Feiyong, Bo Liya and Lin Yaming.

Where: East Gallery, Deshengmen Watchtower, Bei Erhuan Zhonglu, Xicheng **When:** Tue-Sun 9 am - 5:30 pm **Admission:** 2 yuan **Tel:** 8201 4962



Print by -Song Yuanwen

Four Printmakers

Song Yuanwen, Wang Weixin, Lin Tong, Wu Biduan and Zhang Guilin headline this show of block prints. Works by these artists are part of collections at the British Museum and the Peter Ludwig Museum in Germany.

Where: Qin Gallery, 1-1E Enjoy Paradise, Huaweili, north of Beijing Curio City **When:** Daily 9:30 am - 6 pm, till August 31 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0461

Leather Shadow Puppets

Mr. Hai, a collector of traditional leather shadow puppets, will give demonstrations of northern-style shadow puppetry, called *renjiaban*.

Where: Puppet House, 11 Nongzhanguan Nanli **When:** August 22 and 29, 7:30 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6591 7691

Language Exchange

A Chinese sophomore English major (female) seeks a native English speaker for language exchange.

Email: minami712@hotmail.com

Free Lectures (in English) on "Peoples and Cultures in China" By Professor Zhang Haiyang, Central University of Nationalities From 9-11 am, Sept 13, 20, and 27 At China International Cultural Exchange Center (和平里建材大厦对面) R.S.V.P. 64202152 64284046

FREE

A Cool Summer in the Pamirs

Muztagata, the world's easiest to climb 7500-meter peak.

By Tong Meng / Xiao Rong
Besides the road that runs through the Taklamakan Desert in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the Sino-Pakistan Highway crossing the Pamir Tableland has always been an attraction to me. From Kashgar, the border with Pakistan on the Karakoram Highway is just 400 kilometers away, but it is almost 4,000 meters higher in altitude.

This is a trip that fits extremely well with the summer season. Despite the fairly high summer temperature in Kashgar, you can still feel the late autumn breath on entering the Pamir Tableland. In July and August each year, climbers from around the world come to Mustagata, known as the world's easiest to climb 7,500-meter peak.

On both the north and south side of the ancient Silk Road, is the Pamir Tableland, known as "the ridge of the world," where numerous ancient fortresses and structures such as *Shitoucheng* (Stone City) and *Gongzhubao* (Princess Castle) still stand.

The First Day: Glacier in Midsummer

Kashgar — Wupa'er — Aoyitake Glacier Park (90 kilometers)

There are regular buses from Kashgar to Tashkurgan and into Pakistan. A few intrepid travelers choose to bicycle or hike, but that requires considerably more time.

After an early start, breakfast is available at Wupa'er village. A restaurant across from the mosque offers delicious noodles and barbecued lamb. This is one of the last good restaurants for some time, so it is advisable to stock up on food here.

After Wupa'er, we arrive at Aketaoke Erkezi Autonomous County and the Aoyitake Glacier Park, where there are some hotels and restaurants. The mountain and glacier remain part of the view for the next several hours. During summer, there are frequent avalanches, loud and spectacular.

The Second Day: "Father of Ice Mountains" inverted in the lake

Aoyitake Glacier Park — Gaizi River — Baisha Lake — Karakuli Lake (140 kilometers)

After leaving Aoyitake, the highway follows the Gaizi River for some 50 kilometers, passing through one police checkpoint. There are wonderful descriptions of this road in the travel notes of the famous explorer, Sven Hedin, who passed through in the early twentieth century. The road is frequently washed away by summer floods, and restored every year. Even a bridge weighing 800 tons could be washed away from the mountainside to the bottom of the valley.

After crossing a 4000-meter pass, a strange scene appears on the right side: white sand can be seen in a valley that occupies tens of kilometers, with a small mountain, namely Baisha Mountain and Baisha Lake on the western side.

Soon afterwards, two huge snow mountains appear on the left. The two peaks are both over 7,000 meters — Kongur Shan and Muztagata. This is a good spot to break the journey to stay by the magnificent Kalakuli Lake, where the accommodation is expensive and bad, but the scenery is excellent. A stop here is not complete until you have taken a photo of Muztagata and its inverted image reflected in the lake. The weather can change extremely quickly here, sunshine one minute, rain and snow the next.

The Third Day: International village at the foot of Snow Mountain

Kalakuli Lake — Muztagata (25 kilometers)

Today's trip is a visit to the Muztagata base camp. In this international village at an altitude of 4,400

meters, climbers from around the world congregate in July and August every year. Local villagers provide services for climbers, some purchase no longer wanted equipment, or exchange their labor for outdoor articles.

Donkeys are available for hire at Subashi village for the trip to the base camp, which takes about two hours.

Unless you are planning on climbing the mountain, half a day is enough to look around. Some people take sledges up the mountain and slide all the way down, combining two sports in one.

The Fourth Day: Jincao Sands beside the Stone City

Muztagata — Tashkurgan — the Stone City (90 kilometers)

The road from Subashi to Tashkurgan is in good repair and the trip takes about one hour. On the way, you will pass Taheman, where you can bath in the hot springs.

Tashkurgan means Stone Tower in the language of the local Tadjiks, who have lived there for generations. The Tadjiks are the only minority nationality of Indian and European origin that originated in China. When Tadjik people meet each other, men usually shake hands and then kiss each other on the backs of the hands. Women kiss faces or mouths when meeting each other, and young girls kiss the palm of elder men.

The Stone City and Jincao Sands on the far side of Tashkurgan County are quite beautiful. The Stone City is actually the fortress the Tadjik people once used as a defense against enemies. It was known as Puliguo in the Han Dynasty and Pantuoguo during the Tang Dynasty.

The Fifth Day: Princess Castle

Tashkurgan — Princess Castle — Khunjerab Pass (120 kilometers)

The Princess Castle is located on a hilltop in the Mintaka Valley. According to legend, a princess of the Han Dynasty was being escorted to Persia to marry a king, but when the party reached Tashkurgan, it was discovered that she was pregnant. The prospect of the king's wrath sent a wave of terror among the officials charged with escorting the princess to Persia, until her servant explained that a god of the sun had been visiting the princess each day at noon, and it was he who was the father of the child.

As the soon-to-be-born child was clearly going to be a deity, it was decided that it would be best for all concerned for the princess to travel no further, and so a castle was built for her there, where she and her son, born some time later, spent the rest of their lives.

At an altitude of 4,800 meters, the Chinese border checkpoint is snow-covered from late October to mid-April. Even in the summer, it is generally extremely cold, but quite picturesque, in a bleak kind of way.

•Climate:

Though the temperature in Kashgar can reach 40 degrees centigrade during the day in summer, it is fairly cool at night. Up in the highlands, it can snow even in mid-summer, so be sure to pack some warm clothing.

•Accommodation:

Kashgar and Tadjik County offer some reasonably high standard hotels. Elsewhere, camping or even staying in the homes of local people can be an option.

•Transportation:

There are reliable gas stations only in Kashgar and Tadjik County, so if you are driving, be sure to carry enough reserve gas. Unleaded gas is not available in Tadjik County.

•Permits:

If you are planning on going all the way to the border or into Pakistan, you will need to get a permit in Kashgar.

•Religion:

The Kirgiz and Tadjik minorities tend to be more traditional in their observance of Islam than the Muslims of northern Xinjiang.

To avoid giving offence, women especially should dress modestly, and avoid wearing revealing clothing.

It is also considered extremely rude to stare, at both people and their belongings.

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Kirgiz women

Photos by Tong Meng